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THE

WORKS

OF

SYMON PATRICK, D.D.

SOMETIME BISHOP OF ELY.

INCLUDING HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

EDITED BY

THE REV. ALEXANDER TAYLOR, M.A.

MICHEL FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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A SERMON

PREACHED AT

ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

ON THE LATE DAY OF

FASTING AND PRAYER,

NOVEMBER 13, 1678.

IMPRIMATUR.

Nov. 23, 1678. Guil. Jane, R. P. D. Hen. Episc. Lond. a Sacris Dom.

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF THE PARISH OF ST. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN.

THIS sermon being printed merely because many of you have desired it, I hope you intend it shall not lose its fruit, but be imprinted in your memories and on your heart. It is plain, as becomes the habit of a mourner; but what it wants in ornament, it makes up, I trust, in honest affections, and substantial endeavours to do you good; and if it be received into honest and good hearts, may conduce much to your happiness here and hereafter. I pray God it may; and beseech you every day to commit the custody of yourselves so seriously unto him in well-doing, that you may every one of you be able to say boldly, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me:* nay, you may have that comfortable hope which St. Paul had, and say with him, 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, *I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion: and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.* Amen.

A SERMON ON THE LATE FAST,

Nov. 13, 1678[a].

JEREMIAH XIV. 9, latter part.

Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

THE occasion of our solemn meeting at this time is "an information that hath been given (as we are told in the proclamation which called us hither) of an horrible design against the life of his sacred majesty;" which must needs have drawn along with it such fatal consequences, had it succeeded, as would have endangered "the subversion of the protestant religion and government of this realm: which God of his infinite mercy hath hitherto prevented, and it is to be hoped will prevent for the future."

These reasons have moved the parliament to desire, and his majesty to grant and appoint, that this day be set apart "for the imploring the mercy and protection of Almighty God to his majesty's royal person, and in him to all his loyal subjects, and to pray that God would bring to light more and more all secret machinations against his majesty and the whole kingdom."

For the obtaining these great blessings, we ought in the devoutest manner to lift up our hearts and our hands (as this prophet speaks elsewhere) to God in the heavens; acknowledging indeed that we are a very *sinful generation, a people laden with iniquity*, who deserve, if he should punish us according to our provocations, to be utterly abandoned by him; but humbly beseeching him of his infinite clemency to have patience with us and spare us, and not to cut us down as barren trees that cumber the ground, but to try us at least a while longer, whether we will bring forth the fruit he justly expects from us. Which though we have often promised, and not performed, and thereby made ourselves the more obnoxious to his heavy displeasure, yet since he hath not taken the for-

[a] [This fast was appointed in consequence of the alarm created in the public mind by the declarations of Oates respecting the supposed popish plot. The proclamation is dated Oct. 25.—London Gazette.]

feitures we have made of his favour, but still continues it to us, nay, in a wonderful manner defeats the attempts of those who would subvert our religion, we have encouragement to importune him in such words as these I have now read, and to say, Though we have been false to thee and to our own vows, *yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.*

Which are part of an humble deprecation of God's displeasure, which the prophet Jeremy makes in the behalf of Judah and Jerusalem; and are the fittest I could think of to put into your mouths at this time, for the averting of God's judgments from this poor church and kingdom.

The Jews, for whom the prophet was so importunate in those days, languished under, and were in danger to be devoured by, a most miserable famine; which in that country was wont to come from want of rain, as here, in this part of the world, from overmuch moisture. Thus the chapter begins (as the words run in the Hebrew): *The word of the Lord, that came to Jeremiah concerning the restraints* which were upon the clouds, that is, by the command of the Almighty; who detained their showers, and so brought a dearth upon the land.

This dearth is described in a very dreadful manner from thence to the 7th verse, but looks nothing so terribly, to my apprehension, as a famine of the word of God would do; which we may fear would have followed here in these countries, if God had permitted our enemies to accomplish their designs against us. For they would have shut up the holy Scriptures from you, and laid a restraint upon that heavenly doctrine which hath so many years (to use the words of Moses) *dropped upon you as the rain, and distilled as the dew: as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass*[a].

Our unfruitfulness indeed under such sweet influences of heaven may bring upon us this sore punishment: for we must confess, as Jeremy doth in the 7th verse, *that our iniquities testify against us.* They are open and apparent; they accuse us heavily, and demand judgment upon us; they plead for our condemnation, and the severest executions: *for our backslidings are many,* and we have sinned against God most grievously. And therefore, unless he will be favourable to us,

[a] Deut. xxxii. 2.

as the prophet there speaks, for his own name's sake, we must look for nothing but utter destruction.

That is our only hope, as it was theirs. But alas! such was the sadness of their case, that they had too much reason to fear, he who was *the hope of Israel* (as it follows ver. 8.) *and the Saviour thereof in time of trouble,* would not regard them, nor take any further care of them. For that is the meaning of those questions; *Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man who turneth aside to tarry for a night?* That is, as one that minds not what becomes of us, no more than a man is concerned for a place where he intends not to inhabit, but only to pass through in his way to some other country. *Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save?* Or, as some render it, *like one that is weary* with his former labours and toils for the good of his neighbours; which he finds have been bestowed to so little purpose, that he hath no encouragement to do any more to help them. God seemed, that is, to be resolved to send them no more deliverance, but to abandon them to inevitable destruction; or matters were come to such a pass, that the prophet feared he would soon be so resolved: their behaviour towards him being so ungrateful, as it gave him just cause to be *like a stranger* among them, and to employ his power no longer for their salvation. Only this they could say, that he was not yet departed; upon which the prophet grounds some hope he might be prevailed withal to stay with them;—*Yet, O Lord, thou art in the midst of us, &c.* This was the only thing remaining upon which they could build any comfortable expectations; and they were not without a great mixture of fear, that, notwithstanding these addresses to him, he might forsake them.

How like our condition is to theirs I need not stay to tell you; we have too much cause to fear lest God, who is our only hope, and hath been heretofore our Saviour, should let us reap the fruit of our own doings, and interpose no further for our deliverance. He shows us indeed what he is ready to do for us, if we were disposed to receive his new offers of salvation: but we have been so little the better for what he hath wrought for us in a long series of wonders, that it will be no wonder if he resolve now upon another course, and be, as the prophet

here speaks, like *a mighty man that cannot save;* having wearied himself with unprofitable care and pains for our welfare.

But we ought not for all this to cast away all hope in him, since it is apparent, by the unexpected discovery he hath made of the horrid designs of our enemies against us, that he is still in the midst of us, nay, is desirous, if we be willing, to save us. And therefore the fears and sad apprehensions we have should only keep us from presuming too much, even upon this singular privilege and encouragement; and excite us to cry the more passionately and devoutly, *O Lord, leave us not;* forsake us not, good Lord, though we are unworthy thou shouldst stay with us.

In which humble suit that we may prevail with him, I shall endeavour,

1. First, to make you sensible what a privilege, what a glory and security it is, to have *God in the midst of us:* that so you may be awakened to use your best endeavours to keep him with us.

2. And you will be more excited to this, if I briefly show you in the second place, that this extraordinary presence of God with the people will not secure them from the severest punishments if they be disobedient to him; nor is there any reason for their presumption that he is immutably tied to them. No,

3. It will be apparent that it ought rather to be expected he should punish them because of his care of them, (expressed by this phrase,) and that he should quite leave them if they will not be amended by those punishments, because they are insensible of his care.

4. And how great a plague that is, I believe you will be sensible, though I say nothing of it. And therefore,

5. In the last place I shall direct you how to prevent it, by such prayers to God as may obtain the favour of his continued presence with us.

I.

The first of these will need no other illustration but the explaining of these two phrases in my text: *Thou art in the midst of us,* and *we are called by thy name.* By which we shall presently discern what a glory and security this was to

Israel; and what, by a parity of reason we may now upon the same account make our boast of, above many other nations. The explication of the latter depends upon the former, for therefore they were *called by his name*, i.e. owned by him for his peculiar people, because he was in the *midst of them*. This alone then will require my pains to explain it. And there are six expressions which I have observed in the holy Scriptures, that testify the extraordinary presence of God among that people, (who now were in danger to be deserted by him.) and abundantly satisfy us in the meaning and propriety of this speech, that he was *in the midst* of them.

1. First, they are said to be a people *near unto the Lord*[b]. He also *exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints, even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him*. Which signifies a particular affection he had for them; inclining him to use them in a more familiar manner than he did any other people upon the face of the earth. For the rest of the world were treated as strangers, while these had the honour to approach unto him as his companions and friends. And therefore,

2. As they are said to be *near unto him*, so he is said to be *nigh unto them*. Which is the reason of the former; and justly esteemed by Moses to be a privilege wherein they excelled all mankind: *What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous, as all this law which I set before you this day*[c]*?* The Psalmist, you read in the place forementioned, speaks of his *exalting the horn of his people, and the praise of his saints*: that is, making them a nation praised, famed, and renowned throughout the world: and here you find what it was that made them so great and illustrious, viz. the gracious presence of God among them, ready to do any thing for them that they desired; as appeared in that admirable form of government and divine service which he had already established in their nation.

3. God's nearness to them and theirs to him was manifested in this, that *he dwelt among them*[d]. *And I will dwell*

[b] Psalm cxlviii. ult. [c] Deut. iv. 7. [d] Exod. xix. 45, 46.

amongst the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God. It was a considerable testimony of their nearness to God, that *they had stood before him at mount Horeb,* and received the law from his mouth: which moved Moses to charge them to preserve a special remembrance of this, as you may read at large in Deut. iv. 10, 11, 12. But though this was a most memorable, yet it was not the only nor the greatest (because not the most lasting) token of their nearness to him. For, lest it should be thought that he was then only present among them, at that famous time and place; he was pleased to declare afterward that he would dwell among them, and settle his abode with them; that in all future successions, and whithersoever they went, they might be assured of the same divine presence, which appeared to them at Horeb.

4. In order to which he commanded them to build him an house, called the *sanctuary,* or holy place; that they might be the more sensible of his constant abode with them: *And let them build me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them*[e]. Accordingly he there gives directions how it should be built; and orders how it should be furnished with a table, and dishes, and spoons, and candlestick and snuffers, and abundance of other household stuff: whereof no reason can be given but this, that it might represent in the most familiar manner to the grossest souls in the nation, that God dwelt, and, as it were, kept house among them.

5. And that it might be more apparent this was his house, and that herein he dwelt among them, this house was seated *in the midst of their camp*[f]; and there was also a glorious cloud covered it, whereby it was sanctified to be his habitation[g]. The pillar of the cloud and fire, that is, which had led them out of Egypt, and was the special token of his presence with them, he there promises should rest upon this house, and consecrate it to himself. And accordingly you find that as soon as Moses had finished this habitation, and set it up, *a cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord filled the taber-*

[e] Exod. xxv. 8. [f] Numb. xi. xvii. [g] Exod. xxiv. 43.

nacle: so that Moses was not able to enter into the place, *because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled it*[h]. On the outside of the house, that is, there was a smoke; but within there was a most glorious brightness; which sometime broke forth in an amazing splendour, as a visible token of his presence in the midst of them. So you read in many places, which I cannot stand now to mention, that the *glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and appeared to all the congregation;* dazzling their eyes, and frighting them, when they were in the greatest tumults and rebellions against Moses and Aaron: for it looked then like a consuming fire, which they thought would presently devour them.

Lastly, God's dwelling among them was so clearly demonstrated, he was so nigh to them, and made himself so familiar with them, that he is said to be seen *face to face among them.* So you read Numb. xiv. 14, where the people being in a mutiny against the only good men amongst them, *The glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle,* and the Lord threatened to disinherit them, and had then done execution upon them, had not Moses interposed for them by this argument, that the people of Canaan would make an ill construction of it, *for they have heard that thou, O Lord, art among this people, that thou, Lord, art seen face to face, and thy cloud standeth over them,* &c. Read also Deut. v. 4, and when you have considered all this seriously, you will see there was reason to say that the *Lord was in the midst of them;* and in an extraordinary manner sensibly present to this people. They were above all others dear to him, and had the highest marks of his favour and love. None could more presume of his indulgent kindness to them, or be more assured of his tender and affectionate care, watching over them to preserve them: unless it be ourselves, who have a greater grace vouchsafed to us, and more illustrious demonstrations of his powerful presence with us, to bless, protect, and defend us, than the Israelites, though so much in his favour, could boast of.

We, whom he hath elected to be his peculiar people, *called to be saints,* and *sanctified,* excel them as much as they did

[h] Exod. xl. 34, 37.

other nations. He hath *exalted our praise* far above theirs who were heretofore so much renowned; and hath approached so nigh to us, and made us so near to himself, that we may glory in his holy name, and say, in a far more noble sense than they could, that he hath spoken to us face to face. For *no man hath seen God at any time;* but *the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. And the Word was made flesh,* say the apostles of our religion, *and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*[i]. God shone into the very hearts of these holy men, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*[j]. And *what they saw and heard they have declared to us, that we might also have fellowship with them;* and (they protest that) *truly their fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*[k], *who is the image of the invisible God, and the brightness of his glory*[l]. By whom God looks upon us and speaks to us, through our own flesh; for he dwells not now, as he did among them, in a tabernacle made of curtains and beasts' skins, or in a house of stone; but hath made our nature his dwelling-place. The flesh of man is become the sanctuary of God, wherein he will dwell for ever; as our Lord hath assured us, by sending down from his holy place the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of glory upon us; whereby all Christians are *built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*[m]: who hath delivered to us his oracles in the holy gospel, where such things are revealed unto us as the *angels desire to look into*[n]. For the *new Jerusalem*, of which we are citizens, *came down from God out of heaven*, and when it descended St. John heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God*[o].

Nor was all this proper only to those times when Christianity was first planted in the world, but we have still visible assurances of his gracious presence among us, and of his dear

[i] John i. 14, 18.
[j] 2 Cor. iv. 6. [k] 1 John i. 3.
[l] [Col. i. 15; Hebr. i. 3.]
[m] Ephes. ii. 22.
[n] 1 Pet. i. 12.
[o] Rev. xxi. 2, 3.

love to us; and that is, in the holy sacrament of our Lord's body and blood, where he really and indeed makes himself present to all the faithful, and is in the midst of them. There he calls unto us and says, See the love I bear to you. Behold the tokens of my everlasting remembrance of you. Believe it, I am with you always to the end of the world. I assure you hereby that my body and blood shall preserve you to eternal life; *Because I live, ye shall live also.*

And though you may imagine this to be a privilege common to all Christians, yet, if the matter be well considered, it will appear that we have a peculiar claim to this honour of being a people nigh unto him; or may, at least, in a double regard challenge a special interest in his favour above all those who endeavour wholly to engross and limit it to themselves.

First, in that we have the blessed sacrament of his body and blood more entirely and purely administered unto us. Whereby we are assured he is there present among us, whenas they that depend upon the intention of their priests can have no certainty of so great a blessing. We have him presented to us according to his own institution, and therefore cannot reasonably doubt of receiving there all the fruits of his dying love; whereas they that glory most in his favour have an imperfect representation of him, a lame and defective ministration of that divine grace which he there communicates to his people.

2. We believe also and are sure that our Lord is so nigh us, that we may immediately address ourselves to him, and be confident of finding access, though we take no saints or angels in our way to his blessed presence. We need none to intercede with him for us, like those of the church of Rome who beg the assistance of this or that saint, (especially of the blessed virgin his mother,) to introduce them into his favour, and to recommend them and their suits to him: which manifestly supposes him at a distance, and not to be nigh to such supplicants; who depend upon I know not how many men and women, whom they suppose to be great favourites in the court of heaven, and whose mediation they must use before they can approach him.

This one thing alone is sufficient to entitle us to this privilege of being a people nigh unto the Lord, and having him in the midst of us, above all those churches of that communion. It is

no fancy, but a real truth, that we stand in a nearer relation to him, and may be confident of his favour more than they can be, who dare not go to him but by the intercession of others, whom they desire to procure them acceptance with him. Which very thing also is such an offence to him, that I am confident it sets them still at a greater distance from him. For it is an imitation of that worship which God abhorred so much in the heathen world, that he sent his Son on purpose to destroy it, and to bring them to the acknowledgment of this truth, that *there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.*

This truth, blessed be God, we have received and hold as it hath been taught us by his holy apostle St. Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 4, 5. And by virtue of this, our glory ought to be great in his salvation, and we should triumph in his praise, saying, *What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?* We may lawfully look upon ourselves, (and most thankfully acknowledge it,) as having the Most High in the midst of us after a peculiar manner, to bless, save, and deliver us; in one word, to be our God and singular benefactor. Which as it is the greatest glory, so it was ever accounted the greatest safety and security[p]. For *if God be for us,* as the apostle speaks, *who can be against us?* We need not care, that is, who opposes us, nor fear what man can do unto us; but though all nations should compass us about (as the Psalmist speaks[q]), we might say with the same courage and resolution that he doth, (could we but be assured that God is with us,) *In the name of the Lord will we destroy them. They compass us about; yea, they compass us about: but in the name of the Lord will we destroy them. They compass us about like bees; but they shall be quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord will we destroy them. They may thrust sore at us that we may fall: but the Lord will help us. The right hand of the Lord shall be exalted, the right hand of the Lord shall do valiantly. We shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.*

This is such a satisfaction that it is a wonder we are not all more solicitous to secure the divine presence with us, whereby

[p] Zach. ii. 5. [q] Psalm cxviii. 10, &c.

we might live not only safely but confidently, without those fears and dreadful apprehensions that are apt to possess and terrify us. Which would all vanish could we but rationally hope that we *abide under the shadow of the Almighty*, and could *say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God: in him will I trust. Surely he shall hide me from the counsel of the wicked, and from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity.* There is not a man of us, one would think, but would put away all other fears and dread this alone, lest God should not be with us; did we not presume too much of his favour, and vainly hope for his continued protection, though we be so negligent as to remain utterly insensible of what he hath done for us, and to take no care to behave ourselves worthily, as becomes those who have the honour to be so nearly related to him.

II. III.

Let me therefore briefly awaken you, as I propounded in the second place, to a due use of God's singular grace to you; by representing how far the extraordinary presence of God among a people will be from exempting them from the severest punishments, if they prove ungrateful and disobedient to him. There is so little reason for any presumption of such immunity, that we may rather justly expect, as I said in the third thing I propounded to your consideration, (which for brevity's sake I shall join with this,) that he should punish them sorely, nay, utterly forsake them, if they will not be reformed by those punishments.

The Israelites are a woeful example of this; who fancied indeed strongly that God was tied to them so fast by his promises, that they were in no danger to lose him, though they took no care to keep him with them; but found their error to their cost, and paid dearly for it throughout all generations. When he first manifested himself to them, at their coming out of Egypt into the wilderness, you know how many of their carcases fell there; till they were all consumed but two men, who were the only persons that followed God fully. The cloud which you heard *stood over them* as a shelter to them while they were obedient to his word, would defend them no longer when they rebelled against him, but poured down fiery indignation upon them and destroyed them. From that Lord who

was in the midst of them, from that dwelling-place which they had built for him out of the house of his glory in which they trusted, there came forth several sorts of sore judgments and smote down the choicest of them. For that without all doubt is the propriety of such phrases as that in Numb. xvi. 46. *Wrath is gone out from the Lord, the plague is begun.* From the glory of the Lord, i. e. which appeared then to all the congregation at the door of the tabernacle, (ver. 19, 42,) there issued out the tokens of his divine displeasure in a noisome pestilence; by which and other such like punishments, *their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.* For he who had been so kind to them was so incensed by their repeated rebellions, that he had sworn a little before, Numb. xiv. 22, 23, that they *who had seen his glory and his miracles should not see the land which he promised to their fathers: surely,* saith he, *there shall not any of them that provoked me see it.*

And they that did, when they turned their backs and dealt deceitfully like their fathers, provoking him to anger with their high places, &c., felt the same severe strokes of his just indignation. For *when God heard this,* saith the Psalmist, *he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: so that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,* (which was the first place where the ark of his presence fixed after they came to Canaan,) *the tent which he placed among men; and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemey's hand*[r].

And as he did to Shiloh, so he threatened, for the same reason, to do to Jerusalem; where he afterward chose to dwell, in the famous temple which Solomon built for him. So we read very often in this prophecy of Jer. vii. 12, &c.: *Go now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, &c., therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, as I have done to Shiloh; and I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast all your brethren the whole seed of Ephraim.* Which he repeats again, ch. xxvi. 4, 5, 6. And at last fulfilled the curse which he there threatens in so terrible a manner, that, as

[r] Psalm lxxviii. 59, 60, 61.

Jeremy relates in his book of Lamentations, all that passed by clapped their hands, and hissed, and wagged their heads at Jerusalem. For he cast off his altar, and abhorred his sanctuary; he gave up the walls of her palaces into the enemy's hands, and made her inhabitants as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

But I will not spend the time in relating things so well known; but only remember you how he who appeared to them *face to face*, as I have showed, (i. e. in an open and friendly manner,) told them at that very time when he was so gracious to them, that if they despised his statutes and refused to observe his laws, he would *set his face against them*[s]. In that very face which shone upon them so brightly they could see nothing but frowns and the saddest tokens of his high displeasure, when they set at nought his counsels, and would not be ruled by his will, but followed their own foolish lusts and vain imaginations. He turned then to be their enemy, and was so far from sparing them because they were called by his name, that he verified to the full those words of Amos iii. 2, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.* And there was very great reason for it; as I had better show you some other time, than hinder myself now in that which I mainly intend, and you, I believe, expect. For you are convinced, I suppose, that the Lord was *in the midst of them*, not merely as a benefactor, but as a lawgiver and their judge: and that if they offended him by strange worship, and contempt of all the rest of his precepts, he stood engaged in honour to depart from such a rebellious people. By whose example and your own sad experience you are sufficiently taught, I should think, not to presume of the continuance of God's gracious presence with us in this church and kingdom, but rather expect to be abandoned by him; if we take not some better course than we have done to prevent a judgment which we have most justly deserved.

IV.

What that course is I know you would gladly be informed; and therefore I shall spend the rest of the time in the last thing I propounded; to direct you how to pray to God with

[s] Levit. xxvi. 15, 17.

such prevailing supplications for the continuance of his mercies to us, that we may feel our hearts revived by a comfortable hope that he will not leave us. For as yet he is in the midst of us, and we are called by his name; and therefore ought not to despair of this blessing, but only sue unto him the more importunately for it, saying, *Lord, forsake us not:* that is, Withdraw not thy divine protection from us; deliver us not over to the will of our enemies; deprive us not of thy holy gospel and thy blessed sacraments; nor suffer that light which hath so long shone among us to be put out or obscured.

1. For these blessings we must pray, first, with great fervency and earnestness of spirit. For cold and listless desires will do nothing, especially in a case of such great danger. Which should stir us up (as all dangers when we apprehend them are wont to do) *to cry mightily to God;* as the king of Nineveh ordained, when he heard there was a decree of heaven gone out against them for their destruction[t]. Every soul of us should cry mightily to him *in secret*, where nobody hears us but only God; and in our families (a thing too much slighted) beseeching him to be a guard to us; and in the public prayers (which you should frequent as much as is possible) crying unto the Lord at all times, as the poor distressed mariners in Jonah did, and saying, *We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish.* Nay, in such a dangerous time as this it behoves every man, who knows any of his neighbours or familiars to be negligent in this duty, to awake him, as the shipmaster did Jonah in the midst of that dreadful storm, saying, *What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God; if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not*[u]. And it concerns us all to mind more seriously what we say daily in the public prayers, when priest and people call upon God in these words, *O God, make speed to save us; O Lord, make haste to help us.* For there was never more need of that passionate importunity, which we should use at home too, saying, *O God, be not far from us: O our God, make haste for our help. We are poor and needy, make haste unto us, O God; thou art our help and our deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.*

2. And as we ought to pray with great earnestness, so with

[t] Jonah iii. 8. [u] Jonah i. 6.

great humility, and deep sense of our own unworthiness to find acceptance with God, and obtain the favour of him which we desire. Our souls must lie as low before him as our bodies; and we must sorrowfully acknowledge that we deserve to be utterly abandoned by him, whom we have most shamefully forsaken, and highly provoked to cast off, and let us perish in our iniquities. So Jeremiah teaches us in this chapter, v. 20, and we cannot address ourselves unto him in better words; *We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee.* The remembrance of these ought to be very grievous to us, and the burden of them intolerable. Which if we feel sensibly, it will dispose us to cry to God with the greater fervency and frequency; and to beseech him the more earnestly to spare us, saying, as Baruch, a great friend of Jeremiah, teaches us, iii. 1, 2, *O Almighty Lord, the soul in anguish, the troubled spirit crieth to thee: hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for thou art merciful; have pity upon us, for we have sinned against thee.* And if he do condescend to our request, we shall the more magnify his mercy, and his clemency will be the more admirable in our eyes; when we have been made thoroughly sensible how little we deserved it, nay, how justly we had incurred his severest displeasure.

3. The sense also of our ill deservings will help another way to make our prayers effectual, because it will move us wholly to depend upon God for our deliverance. That is a third thing necessary to make our supplications prevalent. We must in this humble manner apply ourselves to God, and (quitting all confidence in any thing that we can do, even in our prayers) desire him to save us merely for his own sake; there being nothing in ourselves to move him to any thing but only displeasure against us. This Jeremiah also teaches us in the next words to those now mentioned, v. 21, *Do not abhor us* (though we and our fathers have been great sinners, yet) do not abhor us, *for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory.* Which argument he uses also a little before my text, ver. 7, *O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake.* A most excellent form for us to imitate, who may and ought to say, as it there follows, *Our*

backslidings have been many, we have sinned against thee; O thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, we have provoked thee to resolve that thou wilt save and deliver us no more; but do it for thy name's sake, do it for thy truth's sake: disgrace not thy holy religion here established among us; though we be wicked, that is pure; though we deserve to be deserted, that is worthy of thy defence and protection. And may we take the boldness to add, (as thy servants heretofore have done,) thou hast many holy devout worshippers among us, for whose sake we beseech thee to do it. *O look not upon the sinners of thy people, but on them which serve thee in truth*[x]. Are their deeds any better who inhabit Babylon, *that they should therefore have the dominion over Sion? weigh thou our wickedness now in the balance, and theirs also that dwell in the world; and so shall thy name be found nowhere, as it is in our Israel. Not unto us therefore, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory; for thy mercy and thy truth sake*[y]. *Remember not the iniquities of our forefathers, but think upon thy power and thy name now at this time. For thou art the Lord our God, and thee, O Lord, will we praise; and for this cause hast thou put thy fear in our hearts, to the intent that we should call upon thee.*

These last are the words of Baruch, iii. 5, 6, who imitates, you see, his friend Jeremiah, as they all do the Psalmist, with whose words I shall conclude this particular; *O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake. Wherefore should they say, Where is now their God? let him be known among them in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which hath been shed*[z].

That is the third thing: let us profess our sole dependence on him, and expectation merely from his goodness and for his glory; disclaiming all confidence in ourselves, and (let me add) in man too; that is, in all human help and counsels. For which end let me recommend that form of prayer to you for

[x] 2 Esdras iii. 28, 31, 34, and viii. 26.

[y] Psalm cxv. 1.

[z] Psalm lxxix. 8.

perpetual use; *Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man*[a]. I say perpetually,

4. For we must pray to God in this manner with perseverance; *continuing instant in prayer*[b], as the apostle speaks; *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance*[c]: that is, we must not be discouraged if we obtain not our suits presently, but pray still with *all prayer*, secret, private, public; and *in the Spirit*, with earnestness and fervour; *watching thereunto;* i. e. borrowing some time from our sleep, or our business, rather than neglect this duty of fervent prayer; resolving not to be weary, but with *all perseverance* to cry mightily to him till he have mercy upon us.

This is our Saviour's doctrine, Luke xviii. 1, where he spake a parable to this end, *that men ought always to pray, and not faint* or grow weary. For if, as he shows, an unjust and impious judge may be moved by importunity to do a poor widow right, shall we think that *God will not avenge his elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily*[d]. And this was the course that Jeremy here resolved to take, in their great distress for want of rain, ver. last of this chapter, *Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles give rain, or the heaven give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? Therefore will we wait upon thee.* And so truly must we, praying in the Psalmist's words; *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us.*

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud[e].

Let every soul here present put up at least this short petition to God day by day for this church and kingdom, besides those he makes for himself and family. And, as often as you can, set apart some time for more solemn importuning of his mercy towards us.

[a] Psalm lx. 11.
[b] Rom. xii. 12.
[c] Ephes. vi. 18.
[d] Luke xviii. 7, 8.
[e] Psalm cxxiii. 2, 3, 4.

5. And let us be sure to take care of one thing more, without which all this labour will be lost, viz. to make all our supplications with hearty resolutions to reform every thing that we know to be amiss in our hearts and lives.

This was the course to which the king of Nineveh directed his people by his proclamation, requiring all, (in the place I mentioned before,) high and low, to fast and put on sackcloth, and *cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way,* (saith the royal edict,) *and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* A heathen prince, you see, had more sense than to hope he should prevail merely by fasting, humiliation, and earnest cries to God for mercy; and therefore it would be a burning shame, as they speak, if we, who are better instructed, should trust to these things alone, without a sincere and thorough repentance and amendment of life.

This was the unpardonable stupidity of the Jews, (whom I hope you will no longer imitate,) that when they had fasted, and cried to God, and implored the intercession of the prophet also, who here beseeches God not to leave them, they imagined the business was done, and took no further care to bring forth the fruits that God expects from penitents. For which reason God bids Jeremiah hold his peace, and say no more in the behalf of such a naughty generation, as it follows immediately after my text; *Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord will not accept them*[f], *&c.* Read the rest, and you will see his resolution was this; that if they intended no more than they had done, neither their cries nor Jeremy's should obtain his mercy, though they were never so importunate. The main thing was still wanting, which is this I am pressing upon you, most humble addresses to God with hearts fully purposed to amend. This and this alone will do the business, and undoubtedly prevail, though the condition of a nation seem hopeless. For it is plain Jeremiah doth not cease to pray for his people, as you may read here, ver. 19, 20, 21, but, notwithstanding the prohibition now mentioned in the 11th

[f] Jer. xiv. 10, 11, 12.

verse, continues to be their intercessor with God. Which is a sign that he did not understand it as if he were absolutely forbidden to pray for them, but only in case they remained impenitent. Let them but forsake their sins, and love no longer to wander in forbidden paths, and he was confident God would hear his prayers, and not depart from them.

To this remedy therefore we must fly, as the chiefest of all, if we would have God's gracious presence still continue among us; and not imagine we are safe, because we have kept a solemn day of fasting and prayer, and resolve, perhaps, to continue instant in prayer when this day is done. We have been told often enough there is something more which God requires of us, and cannot be ignorant that not all prayers, not all importunate prayers, but the *effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man*[g], avail very much. Which makes it the more strange, that of all things we cannot be persuaded to become truly righteous and good men, but are averse to nothing so much as to that which alone can do us any good. It is a sad thing that we will still split upon the same rock, where we see so many wrecks before us. And our condition, let me tell you, will be the sadder, because we have no excuse left us if we will not beware, and in time make use of this effectual remedy, which hath been so long prescribed us. We are in a far worse condition than the stupid Jews, if we still neglect so powerful a means of our deliverance.

For mark, I beseech you, how much Jeremy had to plead for his countrymen; which God indeed would not allow for a sufficient reason to free them from blame: and yet there is no such thing to be alleged in our behalf. You read how Jeremy sighed and said, *Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place*[h]. As much as to say, This people are to be pitied; for though they are bad, alas for them! they are very bad; yet this is not so much their fault, as the fault of their prophets, who have assured them they are not in such danger as I tell them, and that none of the judgments I have threatened shall come upon them. This he thought might at least alleviate their guilt; that they

[g] [James v. 16.] [h] Jer. xiv. 13.

were cheated and abused by their guides, who soothed them up, and dandled them in their sins.

But God would not admit of this apology; but declares that they and their prophets should all perish together. *Then the Lord said unto me,* (this was the reply,) *The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, &c. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning those prophets which say, Sword and famine shall not be in the land; By sword and by famine shall those prophets be consumed. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword*[h], *&c.* For the people ought not to have believed those that flattered them in their vices; which natural reason, without the help of prophecy, teaches us to be pernicious. And they ought not to have given up themselves so easily to believe those who brought no sufficient testimonials along with them to convince serious minds that they were sent by God to them. It was their love to wickedness which made them so readily assent to liars; and resign up their faith to bold deceivers, who preached only the dreams of their own deceitful hearts.

What a case are we in then if we do not reform, in whose behalf there is not a syllable of this (though, alas, but a feeble refuge) that can be pretended to diminish our crimes? There is not one of the ministers of God among us that hath preached peace unto us. No, they have said it over and over again with one voice, that God is exceeding angry with us, and that he is not yet reconciled after so many sore judgments as he hath sent upon us, and that there is no way to atone him but by unfeigned repentance, and that our repentance is but feigned and insincere without amendment of life. They have cautioned the nation also against all false prophets, as we may call them, particularly against the Romish deceivers, who would lull you asleep, and promise nobody knows what golden days, if we would but return into the bosom of their church. They have discovered likewise all the impostures of men's own naughty hearts, and have alarmed the whole kingdom, and bid them beware of danger, and uprightly shown the way to escape it. And therefore if God would not spare such a poor, deceived, hoodwinked, besotted people as the Israelites, who were led

[h] Jer. xiv. 14, 15, 16.

blindfold into destruction because they loved to be deceived; how can we think he will spare us who are faithfully admonished, and not in the least bolstered up in our wickedness, if when we see ruin just before our eyes, we will not go out of our way to avoid it? You cannot name any one of this church that hath confidently prophesied of glorious times: nor above one impious writer of any note (and he not pretending to the ministry,) that hath laid down principles to encourage men in wickedness and irreligion. And therefore, if we will notwithstanding run on in our evil courses, it is a sign we have no heart to any thing else; but that this is our inclination, nay, our resolution, and that we being unreformable must perish, because we have no mind to be saved in God's way, but to hurry on to destruction in our own.

Never any nation perhaps perished, if we must be undone, against so much reason, against such plain warnings, against so many mercies to invite us to do better, and so many judgments to deter us from our evil ways; against so many convincing instructions, clear and rational arguments, solid confutations, not only of all lewd and atheistical principles, but of popery and of all fanatical doctrines. There can be nothing therefore pleaded in our behalf; but we must be left as the man without a wedding garment, perfectly speechless. A sad and most wretched condition! Sad, because we shall be extremely miserable; and sad, because we shall not be able to say why we were so frantic, as against so many restraints to cast ourselves into such miseries.

Which I beseech you let every one of us, for our parts, endeavour to prevent by timely repentance, never to be repented of, for that is the thing I have shown you still wanting for our preservation. And I must tell you further, in the last place,

6. That as the case now stands, it is not an ordinary repentance and reformation that will serve the turn. We are gone too far, I doubt, towards ruin, to be delivered without some extraordinary endeavours to put a stop to it: and therefore I must say to you for a conclusion of all, as our Lord Christ doth to the lukewarm church of Laodicea[o]: *Be zealous therefore, and repent.* Repentance is not sufficient for the recovery of a church, when there is great apostasy and defection in faith and in man-

[o] Rev. iii. 19.

ners; but we must join zeal with it, which is a pious warmth in our affections for all that is good and virtuous, and that will certainly do the business. We need not fear then the most desperate enemies, no, not our sins; but look upon all the judgments God hath sent upon us, as tokens of his love to us, if they awaken us to zealous repentance. For so our Saviour there encourages us to hope in the words foregoing: *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore and repent.* There would be some hope of us, if we could but see that indifferency, that chilness, nay, deadness which is in too many spirits, turned into a warm, nay, burning zeal, both in the service of God, and for his service.

I. Be zealous therefore first in your devotions, of which I have spoken something already. But let me again beseech you to stir up yourselves to make your supplications to God with more inflamed affection, for the king, for the parliament, for the bishops and pastors of the flock of Christ, for the magistrates, for one another; that all and every of these in their several places may attend their duty and perform it faithfully and zealously. Instead of finding fault, as the manner is, with this and the other person whose actions do not please us, let us fall upon our knees, and with fervent prayers entreat the Divine Majesty that he will bend their hearts to study to do those things which are pleasing and acceptable in his sight, and to do them with all their might, remembering there is no work nor device in the grave, whither they are going.

We tell God every day in the collect for our sovereign Lord the king, that we most heartily beseech him, "he may alway incline to God's will and walk in his way." *O that there were indeed such a heart in us,* as Moses speaks, and that we would constantly with more fervour than ever put up that petition for his majesty: beseeching him also by whom kings reign, to "be his defender and keeper," and not to suffer any of the sons of violence to approach to do him hurt!

With the like ardent zeal should we daily say the following prayer for the queen, his royal highness, and all the royal family, that "he would endue them with his holy Spirit, and enrich them with his heavenly grace." Of which things did we make a greater conscience, and were not careless and frozen in our devotions, we might hope to obtain that which we so

much desire, a clearer discovery of the snares our enemies have laid for us.

For which I beseech you to pray with all the ardour that you are able to raise up in your hearts, that God would bring to light still more and more the hidden works of darkness. Be importunate with him who sees into the greatest secrets, to lay bare to the very bottom all the wicked contrivances that are against us.

Call upon him likewise with the same fervour, that he would "endue his ministers with righteousness," and inspire them with such courage that they may behave themselves like men who have not received *the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*[o].

Pray also that he would raise up the spirits of those who are assembled in the high court of parliament, to consult for our good, unto the loftiest pitch of Christian resolution, wisdom, and integrity. Beseech him to send among them a spirit of might and power, whereby they may act so resolutely and worthily, that if any be false they may be daunted, if any be fainthearted they may be encouraged.

Finally, pray that all the Lord's people may *watch and stand fast in the faith, quit themselves like men, be strong; and do all their things in charity, loving one another with a pure heart fervently*[p].

II. But we must not content ourselves merely with this zeal in our devotions, we must be *zealous also of good works*, Tit. ii. ult. In order to this, (which is all the time will now give me leave to mention,) every soul of us must bestir himself to give a severe check to all vicious affections and actions, and to root them out of himself and his family, and wheresoever he hath any power; looking upon these as the greatest traitors in the nation. And since true zeal will always begin at home, where we have most power to reform, let every man search out with great care, and cast out with great indignation, whatsoever he finds in himself that is contrary to his religion; having a holy jealousy over himself, lest any thing should escape his strictest examination. For why should we think that God will preserve our religion, and maintain it against those that seek to destroy it, if we make no other use of it but only to fillus with vain con-

[o] [2 Tim. i. 7.] [p] 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14. 1 Pet. i. 22.

fidences of his love and favour while we continue in our impurities? If we have any love to it, any value for it, let it have its due effects upon us, by purging us from those things which disparage it, that we may be *vessels of honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work*[q]. And in what work can they that have authority better employ themselves, than in setting themselves to chastise evildoers, to reform all abuses in the places where they live, to discover all workers of iniquity, and to pursue them, when they are discovered, with a just indignation, and bring them to condign punishment? They are very useless if they neglect this, and have little love to their Master and his religion; which had such power over men's hearts heretofore, that even after they had *left their first love,* and declined in their affection to Christianity, they had so much zeal remaining as not to be able *to bear them which were evil.* It is our Saviour's character of the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 2, 4, among whose works (though short of what they did at first, ver. 5) he reckons this for one, and commends them for *trying them which said they were apostles, and were not, and for finding them to be liars.*

III. Which will lead me to the last thing I am to press upon you, and that is, to be zealous for the defence of our religion. Godly zeal, I suppose you all know, is nothing else but the affection of love to God, raised to the pitch of fervency, which will not let us endure any hurt or contempt should be offered to that which he loves, if we can remedy it. Now what doth he love more than true religion? which the purer it is the dearer without all doubt it is to him that hates all iniquity. And where, I beseech you, can you find any religion which in this regard may be compared with that which is by law here established? which deserves therefore all the zeal you can express for its preservation, and at this time calls for all the zeal that it deserves. For it is lost, in all likelihood, without every man's zeal in his place to save it. We are undone if we have not a heat, activity, and courage proportionable to theirs that seek to destroy it.

And is it not a shame that false religion should make men more busy and active, more bold and undaunted, than true

[q] 2 Tim. ii. 21.

religion doth those who have so long professed it, and been instructed in the worth and excellency of it? Or do we expect to have it preserved without so much ado? Are we such fools as to imagine, that if we defend ourselves weakly, faintly, and timorously, when they assault us not only resolutely, but boldly and furiously, we shall get the victory? No, the magistrates must do all that is in their power to execute his majesty's command for the finding out and expelling those that oppose it. And they that are not magistrates must give them their assistance, and quicken those that are. Call upon all your acquaintance who have any power or interest to be honest and upright, to preserve their integrity, and not be tempted by any thing in this world to betray their religion. And tell them it is not enough to be upright, but they must be diligent and zealous; because now is the time for every man to show himself, and to do all that lawfully he may for the honour and safety of his religion. There are no other bounds that I know of which we are to set to our zeal for our religion, but only this; that we do nothing contrary to it. Whatsoever it allows, it now requires, that we may not lose it. We must not suffer our zeal to be damped by politic considerations, respect to our private interest, and desire to please men; but waving all these, take care only that others be not wronged by it, while we suffer perhaps very much in our own concerns.

For he knows nothing of the nature of holy zeal who doth not feel it transport him to act beyond himself, and to make him quite forget his own private concerns, which he thinks of no further than as they are included in the public good. There can be no other meaning of that which the apostles apply to our Saviour, *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up*[s], than this, that he regarded not his own particular interest, nor minded what he was likely to suffer, but all thoughts of it were swallowed up in his zeal to serve God. Who will not be served indeed by our private passions and evil affections, but doth expect that we should not consult with the wisdom of this world, which is for suffering nothing, but avoiding all that may hurt and prejudice us, though God may be thereby very much honoured. And therefore his wisdom (of which we ought to

[s] John ii. 17.

take counsel) bids us forget the damage we may suffer, and lay aside all thoughts of ourselves; so we may but promote his glory. When we have any hope of that, we must hearken to no other advice but that of the apostle, *Not slothful in business; but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*[t]. We would be glad perhaps to follow the other reading of the last part of that verse, *serving the time;* but not in the right sense: serving the time, by serving the Lord faithfully in our several stations.

This he expects from us, this our religion and all good men expect from us; that at this time when the zealots of the Romish church are so outrageously set to destroy us, we should pluck up our spirits, as the phrase is, and imitate, or rather excel them; not in that cut-throat zeal (God forbid) which made the Jewish nation, as it doth them, so infamous; but in a just indignation against such barbarous persons and practices, and in a zealous resolution always burning in our breasts to defend our religion the best we can against their attempts. I am bold to speak in this manner without any undue transport, because I find God himself expressing his zealous affection for the defence of his church in far higher terms than these. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury*[u].

Do not you then listen to any motion which may be made to you, I will not say to leave your religion, but to be remiss and not so zealous for it. Think what a dishonour it will be to you, and how it will endanger it, if when so many *bend their tongues like their bow for lies*, you should not be *valiant for the truth:* which was the charge that Jeremy brought against Jerusalem[x], but I hope will never be your guilt; who have such a religion to defend as will not let you be cowards, if you understand the difference between it and that which opposes it. Consider it, I beseech you, beforehand, that if anybody should attack you with arguments to desert it, you may be *steadfast and unmovable, in nothing terrified by your adversaries* when they tell you popery will prevail notwithstanding all our endeavours to keep it out. Resolve it shall never prevail over your souls, whatsoever may become of your bodies; but as you

[t] Rom. xii. 11. [u] Zach. viii. 2. [x] Jer. ix. 3.

now pray solemnly *God will not leave us,* so you will fortify yourselves impregnably against all persuasions to leave him by quitting your religion.

Do not so much as stoop to hearken to any such seducement, but considering, as I said, well beforehand what it is you must leave, and for what, (if you forsake the communion of this church,) *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind,* (in perfect unity,) *striving together for the faith of the gospel.* So I may truly call our religion here established, from which if you should depart, you leave the old way of serving God for new inventions. For you forsake a religion wherein God is purely worshipped, for one that joins saints and angels with him. You forsake a church that prays to God alone through the intercession of Christ Jesus, for one that prays to saints in the very same form of words wherein they pray to him. You leave the holy Scriptures to follow uncertain traditions; and part with your Bibles for legends and fabulous stories. You go away from prayers and hymns you understand, to a service in an unknown tongue. Instead of the whole sacrament you must be content with half, or rather with none at all. For it is certain, where the blood of Christ is not imparted to you as shed, or poured out of the body, (as it is not in the Roman church,) it is not communicated at all, and the people have no fellowship with Christ in his death, being deprived of his blood which was shed for the remission of sins.

Instead of sure and certain comfort, you must rely in all holy offices upon mere uncertainties; for if the priest's intention be wanting, (of which none can be sure,) there is no baptism, no communion, no orders, no priesthood, no church. And consequently you leave the worshipping of Christ for a worship which for any thing you know may be mere idolatry. For in case there be no transubstantiation, but the bread and wine still remain after the consecration, they themselves have acknowledged it is idolatry to worship them. Now we are sure there is no transubstantiation, and it is impossible that they should be sure there is, (even according to their own principles, because they can never be sure the priest actually intends to do what Christ commanded; and then nothing is done;) and therefore they can never be sure that they are not idolaters.

If you join with those of Rome, all the ancient councils must

signify nothing with you, in comparison with one late conventicle; which was no better than a conspiracy of a few men against the church of Christ. You must quit a church which teaches you to be subject to the king as supreme, for one that teaches you to be subject in the first place to the pope; exchange a church that requires of all its members the strictest obedience to their governor, for one that at least suffers the most rebellious principles to pass for Christian doctrine; and the most bloody murders to pass for Christian, if not meritorious actions. You must leave a church that bids you look about you, and see that you be in the right, for one that would put out your eyes, and bids you blindly follow them: a church that, in St. Paul's words, requires you to *prove all things*, for one that requires you to renounce your reason, nay, common sense, that you may believe the greatest absurdities.

If you leave the established religion, you forsake a church whose service is performed in a plain and grave, a comely and decent manner, for one that is burdened with more ceremonies by far than are contained in all the law of Moses. You depart from a church which only seeks the good of your souls and the glory of God in all its ministrations, for one that is apparently contrived for enriching the priests, and for the glory of the pope. You leave a church which teaches you to live piously, or else gives you no hopes of salvation, for one that indulges men to live as they list, and yet not utterly perish at the last. A church you abandon that is mild and gentle to those that are deceived, for the sake of one that prosecutes all those who dissent from it with fire and faggot, massacres and unheard-of butcheries. Nay, you relinquish a church that is very charitable in her opinions and censures, for one that damns all those to the pit of hell, though never so blameless in their lives and steadfast believers in the three ancient creeds, if they be not of their communion.

You leave a religion which proclaims that *marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*, for one that strictly forbids her priests to marry, but connives at their fornication. That is, you leave a religion in which you are taught to have the greatest regard to the commands of Christ, for one wherein you may more safely break many of his precepts than one of

the laws of the church. To conclude, you leave a religion which is sincere, and void of all deceit and fraud, for one which cheats men with hallowed trinkets, (such as roses, beads, swords, *agnus Dei*, and other waxen ware,) whereby they draw vast sums of money from the simple, for mere toys and baubles.

They that consider not the case may look upon all this as an invective, which, in truth, is but a bare narrative: and no more than is necessary to be said, our enemies themselves being judges, at such a time as this. For they would look upon us, I am confident, as a company of despicable wretches, if we should not dare on such an occasion to speak for our religion. Which teaches us after the example of St. Paul to be *jealous over you with a godly jealousy: fearing lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*[y]. In which you ought to preserve yourselves, and not admit of the Romish mixtures, whereby the simple religion of Christ is adulterated, if you have any regard either to your souls, or your bodies, or your estates, which are all in danger. Be zealous therefore in your religion, and for your religion. Show that you mean not to leave it, (for that is, in effect, to leave your reason, that you may be robbed of your faith,) nor to leave off your most vigorous endeavours to preserve it.

And truly we have the greatest cause to be thus zealous, both in our prayers and in our endeavours to fortify ourselves and one another, to rouse up our courage, to maintain what God hath so long by many wonderful providences maintained and preserved: because he doth not seem to have a mind to leave us, if we will not basely desert him and his cause.

For mark, I beseech you, what encouragement he gives us to hope, that notwithstanding our vile requitals of all his loving-kindness we may be delivered, if we will at last take such a pious course as I have described.

First of all, he hath graciously heard the prayers of his faithful people, who have often besought him that "he would bring to nought all the evils which the craft and subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us." He hath strangely, when we looked not for it, detected their secret counsels: and thereby

[y] 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

delivered our sovereign (whom God long preserve) from the detestable design which was against his life. This was the *Lord's doing* alone, and it ought to be *marvellous in our eyes;* and excite us to do all we can for our own preservation, seeing he hath done so much already. *For unless the Lord had been our help, our souls had quickly dwelt in silence*[z].

Another encouragement is the happy agreement hitherto between the two houses of parliament: who both are industrious to make further discoveries of those ungodly devices which are in part come to light, and to provide the best means they can think of for our safety.

His majesty's gracious declaration also, that he is "ready to join with them in all the ways and means that may establish a firm security of the protestant religion as our own hearts can wish," is a further encouragement.

But the greatest of all is, that God hath done all hitherto for us himself, for his *own name's sake;* notwithstanding our high provocations. There hath been little of man seen in all this business, or in any of our former deliverances, which have been a succession of miraculous works, for the preservation of this church and kingdom. We cannot say that it was the prudence, the diligence, the watchfulness of our counsellors which brought to light the deeds of darkness, but God's infinite mercy alone who touched the heart of one man to reveal those secrets, which, for the present, hath dashed their designs in pieces. As confident as they were, they are fallen short of their aim; and the prey is snatched, as it were, out of their very teeth. *They opened their mouth against us, they hissed, and gnashed their teeth,* but have not as yet been able to say, *We have swallowed them up, certainly this is the day that we looked for: we have found it, we have seen it*[a]. No, *blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth:* which we may very well look upon as a token for good, saying with David, *By this I know that thou favourest me, because my enemy doth not triumph over me*[b]. When they were in so fair a way to it, then to be disappointed of their triumph, is a manifest sign, I think, that God hath a kindness for us: and may encourage us to say when we see them rave, and hear

[z] Psalm xciv. 17. [a] Lam. ii. 16. [b] Psalm xli. 11.

them still brag that the day shall be their own, *Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogance come forth out of your mouth; for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness: for by strength shall no man prevail* [c].

Did we thus religiously depend upon him, and trust in him, I am very confident he would still defeat our enemies, and not suffer them, howsoever they may boast, to triumph over us; even for this very reason, because they are so insolent and barbarous. That is a new thing to be considered for our encouragement. The savage cruelty and bloodiness of their designs against those among whom they lived peaceably, and who have been kind as well as gentle to them, is an argument that God abhors them as much as we can do; and that he will confound them, if we do not provoke him to abhor us and cast us off, for our ingratitude and gross negligence in that religion which hath been so often most wondrously preserved. We may make the same complaint to God that David did, and thereby move him to pity us; that they are not only *our enemies wrongfully*, but *have rendered us evil for good, and hatred for our good will* [d]: which is the character of the worst natures in the world.

It would have been easy for us, were we so disposed as we find them to be, to have destroyed them all long ago: our numbers and strength being so vastly greater that nothing could have restrained us from it, but only this, that our religion is better. Which may make us hope God will be further merciful to us; and not let them prevail, who are emboldened by nothing else to attempt to destroy us, but by this alone, that we are taught to be so kind to them as not to destroy them.

If David made this an argument why God should defend him from those that rose up against him, because they were *gathered together, not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord*, as he speaks Psalm lix. 3; we may much more urge the same motive, with a little alteration of his words, saying, *Deliver us from the workers of iniquity, save us from bloody men. For lo, they lie in wait for us; the mighty are gathered together against us; not for our transgression, nor for our sin, O Lord*, (but quite contrary, because our fear of thee

[c] 1 Sam. ii. 3, 9. [d] [Psalm lxix. 4; cix. 5.]

forbids us to destroy them.) *They run and prepare themselves without our fault: awake to help us, and behold* the danger wherein we are. *Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit them: be not merciful to any wicked transgressor. Consume them in wrath, consume them that they may not be: and let them know that God* (not they) *ruleth here, and unto the ends of the earth.*

And it is a singular comfort surely to know, and steadfastly believe, that as the Psalmist saith elsewhere, (Psalm xcix. 1 according to the old translation,) *The Lord is King, be the people never so unpatient; he sitteth between the cherubims,* (i. e. governs the world,) *be the earth never so unquiet.* Upon him therefore let us depend, and commend ourselves piously to his protection, and we need not fear all the power on earth that they can raise against us. As for their interest in heaven, we are sure it is very small; *For if the Lord had not been on our side, when they rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when they were so wrathfully displeased at us.* They depended, it is like, very much upon their supposed interest in the saints: whom they ply hard with their prayers, and it is probable besought their help very earnestly upon this occasion. For I find they have relied upon them more than they are willing to confess, in former times: particularly when the Spaniards invaded us with their armada called invincible. An image then of the blessed virgin, famous as they pretend for miracles both on the sea and land, was brought in great pomp from Del Puig to the great church of the city of Valencia. And there a solemn litany was sung to her upon the 17th of July, being Sunday, 1588; part of which I shall recite, (out of Ferdinando Texeda[d],) that you may see how little credit is to be given to them, when they tell you they only desire the saints to pray for them.

"We sinners beseech thee to hear us: that thou wouldst impetrate true repentance for us,

We beseech thee to hear us.

[d] [A Spanish monk, converted to the Church of England. In his book entitled Hispanus conversus, dedicated to Edward lord Conway, then secretary of state, he recites the Litany addressed to the Virgin Mary among the reasons which induced him to abandon the Romish communion.—p. 15. 4to. Lond. 1623.]

"That thou wouldst take care to preserve the apostolic see, and all ecclesiastical orders in holy religion,

We beseech thee to hear us.

"That all storms allayed, thou wouldst conduct the catholic fleet of the catholic king in safety to the desired haven,

We beseech thee to hear us.

"That thou wouldst make the catholic fleet of the catholic king victorious over savage heretics,

We beseech thee to hear us.

"That thou wouldst smite the obstinate heretics of England with fear and trembling,

We beseech thee to hear us."

I omit the rest, because this is sufficient to show where their great strength lies, (as to the other world,) which, as it failed then, so no doubt it ever will in time to come. For they are instigated to their bloody attempts by another sort of invisible powers, who, if God permit, may give them indeed very great assistance. But the blessed virgin and the saints, if they know what is doing here, we are well assured will pray against them, and join with us (without our supplicating their favour) in such humble requests as these:

O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.

Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves[e]*?*

And if I put into your mouths a whole Psalm appointed to be read this morning, (and composed in some such distress as now presses us,) with such alterations as may make it applicable to our condition, I am confident I shall neither offend the saints in heaven nor the saints on earth.

Psalm lxxxiii.

Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

[e] Psalm xciv. 1–4.

For lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lift up the head.

They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a church: *that their name may be no more in remembrance.*

For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee.

We cannot tell their numbers, and their combinations; like those of Edom and Ishmael, &c.

But do thou unto them as unto the armada of which they boasted: and as unto the gunpowder conspirators, &c.

O our God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

As the fire burneth the wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord: (that great happiness we wish them with all our hearts.)

Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

That they may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE KING,

ON THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT,

DEC. 8, 1678.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE KING.

ROMANS XV. 4. beginning.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.

THE holy scriptures are so full a storehouse of all divine learning, and we are so frequently exhorted to repair thither for our constant instruction, that as there is no excuse for those who would lock them up from the people of God, and not suffer them to look into them, so they are no less worthy to be condemned, who will not look into them when they may, nor take any care to enrich their minds with those heavenly treasures of wisdom and knowledge, which the royal Psalmist thought more precious than *thousands of gold and silver*.

To correct this negligence, our church now calls upon us to pray, in the collect for this second week in Advent, that we "may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life;" which is infinitely more worth than all our present possessions in this world.

Now that we may do according to our prayers, mark, I beseech you, the first words of the epistle for this day, which I have now read unto you: in which the apostle commends to us the study of the holy scriptures, from the benefit we may receive by them; even by those parts of them which may seem to you perhaps very barren, or little conducing to the profit of Christian people. For, first of all, we may learn something, he tells us, for our Christian instruction, out of those Scriptures which *were written aforetime*, in ancient days, before the advent or coming of our Saviour Christ. And, secondly, this instruction is to be met withal in every part of

these ancient writings; for he says, *Whatsoever things* were written heretofore, in the sacred volumes, *were written for our learning.* There is nothing unprofitable, nothing needless and superfluous in them, but all tends to edification. Nor were they written (you may further consider, in the third place) for their benefit alone who lived when they were written; but *for our learning* also, who live in the days of Christ. *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.*

For the clearer understanding of all which particulars, you may be pleased to observe, that these words seem to come in as an answer to a tacit objection of such as might fancy the scriptures of the Old Testament did not appertain to Christians, or contained nothing of Christ in them. For the apostle had just before quoted a place out of the Psalms of David, and applied it to our Saviour; *Who did not please himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me*[a]. And then (to prevent such an exception as I now mentioned) immediately adds, *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.* As if he had said, Do not tell me that David speaks there concerning himself: for, though that be true, he represented also a greater king than himself; and in such words as those prophesied of the reproaches and persecutions of Christ by the scribes and Pharisees, after the same manner that he suffered by Saul and his servants.

This plain declaration of the apostle about the Scriptures written aforetime should have sufficiently secured them, one would have thought, from all contempt, and preserved a due reverence towards them in the minds of all those who are called by the name of Christ. But so desirous the malignant spirit is to have those holy books thrown out of people's hands, that he hath stirred up several sects, who have not only aspersed them, but utterly rejected them, as useless and unprofitable, nay, dangerous and hurtful. In the answer to whose allegations I shall fully explain my text, and show how every part of those holy books, which were written before Christ's coming, contain something for our learning and instruction.

[a] Psalm lxix. 9.

And for our clearer proceeding, I think it will be necessary to observe, that the first blasphemers of the Scriptures of the Old Testament were they who introduced the doctrine of two Gods; one an evil being, the God of the Hebrews; the other a good and gracious being, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The ringleader of these, in all probability, was Simon Magus the Samaritan, who was followed by a rabble of vile people, such as Basilides, Carpocras, Valentinus, and a number more whose names are not worth the remembering. Who, though they did not profess his name, yet followed his opinion, as Irenæus[b] speaks. "For whosoever they were," saith he, "that adulterated the truth, and spoiled the doctrine of the church, they were all the disciples and successors of this man." Nobody doubts but the Gnostics were, who "are said, among the rest of their doctrines, to have had this, of a good God and an evil God." They are the words of St. Austin[c], in the conclusion of the account he gives us of their heresy: which was followed no doubt by Marcion, Apelles, and their disciples; who openly maintained this, to the great scandal of our religion. For from hence I suppose it was that Celsus the philosopher took occasion to charge Christians with this detestable opinion; that they held "an execrable God" (Θεὸς κατηραμένος) "opposite to the great God of all." But they cleared themselves so well of this crimination, in their admirable writings, that they neither left any colour for it, nor any considerable person that durst maintain it. Till, not long before the days of St. Austin, there started up a Persian, whose surname was Manes; who, following other ancient heretics, (as St. Austin's words are[d],) revived this opinion, when it was in a manner dead and buried; and from him it was ever after called the heresy of the Manichees. Who held two first co-eternal principles of all things, diverse from, and adverse to each other: (as he also speaks) as opposite as light and darkness; the one a good, the other an evil being.

Now the doctrine of these men, concerning the holy scriptures, was conformable to their first foul opinion concerning God, and may be comprehended in these five propositions:

[b] Lib. i. c. 30. [ed. Ben. cap. 27. col. 7 B.] tom. i. p. 106.]

[c] Cap. vi. de Heres. [tom. viii. col. 13.]

[d] Cap. xlvi. de Hæres. [tom. viii.

First, they said that the writings of the Old Testament were from the evil principle:

Secondly, that they belonged only to the Jews, not to Christians.

Thirdly, that they were not profitable for the confirmation of faith, nor

Fourthly, for the teaching good manners, but rather destructive to them; and,

Lastly, that they contradicted the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus.

The folly of which, if I may have leave briefly to represent, it will be the clearest explication I can give of these words of St. Paul, and let you see how much we may learn, even out of the Scriptures which were written aforetime.

I.

The first of them (viz. that the writings of the Old Testament were from the evil principle, the Law and the Prophets being dictated by bad angels,) is such a senseless blasphemy, that I should have wholly omitted it, were it not for the reason now mentioned; that it gives a fair occasion to show there is something worth our learning even in such historical passages of the old Scriptures as seem less instructive. For St. Paul having plainly declared that the law and the gospel had the same author, when he saith, *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*[e], proceeds in the next chapter of that epistle to illustrate this most elegantly from the history of Abraham, *who had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman*[f]*:* the first of which was *born after the flesh,* but the other was *by promise. Which things,* saith he, ver. 24, *are an allegory; for these are the two covenants or testaments; the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, the other from Jerusalem or Sion, which is free, the mother of us all.*

Where we learn these two things. First, that even in such historical relations as these the apostles read diviner things, which they saw there lie hid and concealed. For that is his meaning when he saith, *These things are an allegory; aliud*

[e] Gal. iii. 24. [f] Gal. iv. 22.

portendentia, (as Tertullian expounds it[g],) 'a speech about another matter, portending something else than at first sight appears.' For he clearly discerned that under the names and actions of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, God was pleased to foreshadow what he intended to do in future times, both at the giving of the law, and when he sent his Son to preach the gospel. And secondly, we learn, that as those two wives of very different condition had but one and the same husband, who was the father of those two children; so the two Testaments, the old and the new, which were represented by those two women, belong to one and the same God; who brings forth and breeds up his children under various dispensations, but is the father of all those who lived piously under the Old Testament, as well as of those who live so under the New.

This is the necessary consequence of the apostle's discourse. If those two wives and their children were an allegory of the two Testaments, and of those who were born and bred under them, then as those two children had the same father though different mothers, so the two Testaments have the same original; though they be dispensations as different as the bondwoman and the free. There cannot be a more evident confutation of the false principles of these men than this observation of the apostle: who in the beginning of this epistle calls himself *an apostle separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*[h]; and in the entrance of the Epistle to the Hebrews openly avows that the same *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.*

But I shall not trouble you any further in so manifest a business, having thus far obtained my end; which was to show that the historical books are not unuseful, but more serviceable than many imagine; not merely because they relate the wonderful providence of God over that people for whose use they were first written, in blessing them when they were faithful to him, and punishing them when they revolted from him; but

[g] L. v. contra Marcionem, c. 4. [p. 465 B.] [h] Rom. i. 1, 2.

because they contain many secret representations of things belonging to the person and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II.

The next part of their wicked doctrine was, that the Old Testament did not belong to Christians, but only to the Jews. This Faustus the Manichee (against whom St. Austin wrote thirty-three books) endeavoured to persuade by his natural eloquence and smooth way of speaking, (for which he was famous[1],) without any judgment or reason at all. For it is directly confuted by the words of my text, as if the apostle intended to anticipate such an objection, and prevent the entrance of this extravagant conceit into anybody's mind. The absurdity of which appears also further from hence, that the promises made in the Old Testament belong to us Christians, who are therefore concerned in the Testament itself. Which is a consideration to which St. Paul directs us in the epistle for this day, a little below my text; ver. 8. *Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision,* sent, that is, to preach the gospel unto the Jews, *for the truth of God;* to justify, that is, the faithfulness of God who promised to send him, as it follows, *to confirm the promises made unto the fathers;* that is, make good those promises he had passed to them in ancient time, among which this was the chief, that he would send a person into the world in the fulness of time, in whom all nations should be blessed. So it follows, ver. 9, 10, &c. *And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles;* &c. *And again, Esaias saith, He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.* All which places of the old Scriptures are alleged to show, that though this was the grand privilege of the Jews, that God had expressly obliged himself by promises to their fathers to send his Son Christ to them, of which promises the Gentiles, i. e. people of other nations, were wholly ignorant, and knew not a syllable of this grace; yet God

[1] See St. Aust. Confessions, l. v. cap. 3 and 6. [tom. i. coll. 109, 11.]

intended to be so merciful as to make all the world partakers of those promises which the Jews alone had recorded in their holy books. Which the apostle proves was agreeable to the books themselves wherein these promises were contained. For they predicted that the Gentiles also should rejoice in God, and praise him, and sing unto his name, because Christ the Son of David should reign over them as well as his ancient people, and they should place their hope and trust in him. This he urges from more places of the Old Scriptures (as well of the law of Moses, as of the Prophets and Psalms, as you will find if you take the pains to examine them) than he alleges for the proof of any one thing whatsoever; for this great reason, that the Gentiles might be the more confirmed and settled in the faith of the gospel when they saw it was brought to them not by the will of man, but by the good pleasure and counsel of God, long before predicted in the holy Scriptures of truth.

This is a plain demonstration how much we are concerned in the Scriptures written aforetime; whose true learning the same apostle shows in another place is not understood by the Jews, but only by Christians; to whom the grace of God is translated, which is taken away from the other, till they also believe on Christ Jesus. Read 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15, where he saith, their *minds are blinded*, and that *they have a vail upon them in the reading of the Old Testament; which vail is done away in Christ*, i. e. when men become Christians. *But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart: nevertheless when it* (their heart) *shall turn to the Lord* (our Saviour Christ), *the vail shall be taken away*, and not till then. Which is an evidence that we have more benefit by the Scriptures written aforetime than the Jews themselves, till they also turned Christians; and abundantly confirms that pithy saying of Tertullian, (which comprehends all that need be said in this argument,) *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet;* 'the New Testament lies hid in the Old, and the Old Testament is revealed and discovered in the New.' And so I have done with the second cavil of these men against the Old Testament.

III.

The third part of their impious doctrine about this matter

was, that the Scriptures written aforetime were unprofitable for the confirmation of our faith. Which is directly against the whole scope of the apostle in this place, and is confuted in express terms by our blessed Lord himself in several places of the last chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. Where, speaking of his passion to two of his disciples, ver. 25, 27, he upbraided them that they were such *fools and slow of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken: and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* And not long after, appearing to all the apostles, and eating with them, he said, ver. 44, *These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* And then opening their understanding, that they might understand the Scripture, he said, *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day, &c.* So abominably false it is which those heretics were wont to assert, that in the Old Testament there was no testimony concerning Christ. They are the words of Faustus, as they are reported by St. Austin [k], and may well make us wonder how any men that were called by his name should arrive at such a boldness as to contradict Christ himself, who proved all things concerning himself out of those ancient books.

But this it is to be proud and self-conceited; to be forward to teach [l], before men have learnt; to be addicted to a sect, and to love to contradict; to be engaged early in a party, and then to stop one's ears against the means of information; to be carried away with a strong antipathy to that which men do not understand, nor have duly weighed and considered. Against all which vices the Scriptures caution us sufficiently, if we mean to understand them: telling us plainly, that if we will not purge ourselves from such ill humours, we shall become vain in our imaginations, and our foolish hearts will be darkened. Witness the foolish exception that these men took to the books of Moses, because they represented God, according to their

[k] Lib. xii. contra Faust. c. 1, 2. [tom. viii. col. 225 sqq.]

[l] Vid. S. Austin. Confess. l. v. c. 5. [tom. i. col. 110 F.]

imagination, as desirous of the blood and fat of beasts, which he required to be offered in sacrifice to him. Whereas nothing is more manifest, than that God himself by the prophets (who spake, as they acknowledge, by the same Spirit that Moses did) utterly disclaimed any delight or satisfaction that he took in mere sacrifices, though never so numerous and costly: nay, protests that he abominated them, if they were not brought to his altar with a pious mind, and accompanied with actions of justice and charity. Which makes it apparent, that it was the heart of the offerer to which he had regard, and that he looked upon these but as outward testimonies and significations of a grateful mind, or of a penitent heart, or of a soul resolved to devote itself to his service.

I need not add, that they were manifest figures and presignifications of the great sacrifice of Christ Jesus, who hath purged away our sins by his own blood; nor take any further pains to confute these audacious heretics from other places of holy writ. I will rather take to task a little another sort of men, no less bold and shameless, who would fain be thought the greatest enemies to heretics of all men in the world. I mean them of the Romish religion, who, notwithstanding their glorious pretences, would be heartily glad if this proposition could be made good, that the Scriptures written aforetime are unprofitable for the confirmation of points of faith. For our writers have so overpowered them with testimonies fetched from thence, that they are not able to stand before us to defend the prime article of their present faith; that article which is the principal cause of the divisions of Christendom, for whose sake all other controversies have been craftily kept on foot; I mean that of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome[m]: which we utterly confound by beginning at Moses, (to allude to the words before mentioned,) and so showing through all the Scriptures written aforetime, that He, and Joshua, and David, and Solomon, and Asa, and Jehoshaphat, and Hezekias, and Josias governed the priests and the whole tribe of Levi: "ordering the time of their waiting and officiating in their courses; appointing judges in ecclesiastical causes, and setting presidents

[m] Romæ enim subjici, inde pendere, hæc vestræ religionis summa est.—[Launcelot Andrewes] Resp. ad Tort. p. 81. [p. 97. ed. 8vo. Oxon. 1851.]

over those judges; taking away abuses and corruptions in religion; commanding the ark to be removed from one place to another, and calling the people by their proclamations to come and meet there before the Lord; requiring the priests to read the book of the law, and to reduce things to a conformity with it; renewing the covenant of Moses for reformation of religion; making missions of priests into such parts of the country as they saw needed their assistance, and (to say no more) ejecting the high-priest himself, and deposing him from his office."

Now what say our adversaries to all this? truly, after many other poor shifts, they are at last driven thus far to side with the Manichees as to say, that these things belong not to us: for that authority which was in kings under the Old Testament is now translated (if you will believe those doctors) unto the priests under the New. But what man of sense can entertain this wild fancy, that kings under the government of Christ are in a worse condition than they were in under the discipline of Moses? Or that Christ should single out kings of all other men to be injurious to them, and deprive them of their former rights, when he left everybody else in the very same estate wherein he found them? Was this our Saviour's business, (when he came *to reign over the Gentiles,*) to strip their princes of their prerogatives, and lessen their power and authority over their subjects? How detestable would the apostles have been, if they had broached this doctrine when they went out to convert the world! Or shall we be so impious as to think that St. Paul equivocated, or had some mental reservation, when he commanded *every soul* in the Roman church to *be subject to the higher powers?* Mark, I beseech you; it is upon the church of Rome that he presses this doctrine (chap. xiii of this Epistle) more than upon any other church whatsoever: as if he foresaw there would be an apostasy among them from this faith. *Let every soul be subject:* "though thou beest an apostle, (and the bishop of Rome I hope was never greater than so,) though an evangelist, though a prophet, or whatsoever thou beest, thou must be subject:" as St. Chrysostom (whose words these are) faithfully expounds the apostle's honest meaning[n].

[n] [In loc. hom. xxiii. tom. ix. p. 686 B.]

And so Christian princes long after his time understood him; and did not fear both to assume this authority, and to justify it when they had done so, after the same manner that we do, by the example of the kings that ruled over the people of God before the coming of Christ. Witness, to name one for all, Charles the Great; a prince as great in ecclesiastical policy as in feats of arms: who, in his preface to his Capitulary [o], tells the clergy of the empire, "that he had sent his deputies to them, that they by his authority might, together with them, correct what stood in need of amendment; according to the example of the godly king Josias, who endeavoured," saith he, "to restore the kingdom which God had given him to the service of the true God; by going about it, by correcting and admonishing it, as we read in 2 Kings xxiii."

And they had been very much to blame if they had not taken this pains. For, as the forenamed St. Chrysostom admirably speaks in a sermon of his, recorded by one of the writers of his life [p]: Οὐ γὰρ οὕτως αὐτοῖς μέλει περὶ πολέμου, ὡς περὶ ἐκκλησίας· οὐχ οὕτω περὶ πόλεως, ὡς περὶ ἐκκλησίας, 'the care appertaining to kings is not so much about war, as about the church: not so much about political affairs, as about the church:' with whose preservation and safety God having been pleased to entrust them, he expects they should be as angry with those who would adulterate his worship therein settled, as Moses was with Aaron when he had made the golden calf. That very example is sufficient to show the authority which the civil magistrates have in matters of religion; with which they ought not to part, no more than they would with their crowns: nor to suffer their people to be deprived of these holy books wherein they may read these things, and thereby be so thoroughly possessed with a sense of their high authority, that they may never be debauched from their duty. But of that more presently.

IV.

Let us first hear what the next exception of the Manichees was against the Scriptures written aforetime; which they said

[o] [In Capit. Aquisgran. A. D. DCCLXXXIX. — Mansi, Concill. tom. xiii. append. 3. col. 153.]

[p] Georgius Alexandrinus, tom. ult. p. 265. [ed. Savill.—scil. Serm. post reditum ab exsilio, tom. iii. ed. Ben. p. 431 C.]

were "unprofitable to teach men good manners; nay, were destructive and contrary to them." There are two parts, you see, of this wicked suggestion; the first of which is so directly confuted by St. Paul in another place, that one would think these men never read the New Testament at all, nor the Old for any other end than to carp at it, and frame objections against it. For in 2 Tim. iii. 16, he expressly says that *πᾶσα γραφὴ, all Scripture*, (speaking of the Old, for not much of the New was then extant,) *given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* Upon which words you may be pleased to take this short gloss. All holy learning consists in being wise and in being good; in acquiring of both which the Scriptures, being divinely inspired, give us singular assistance. As for the first (Christian wisdom), it consists in knowing the truth, and in rejecting falsehood. Now behold how profitable the Scriptures are in both regards: for they are profitable *for doctrine*, which is teaching the truth; and *for reproof*, which is confuting the falsehood of error. And then for the second (learning to be good), that consists of two parts more, as the prophets instruct us: to cease to do evil, and to learn to do well. To both which ends also the apostle affirms the holy Scripture is profitable: *for correction*, that is, when we do amiss; and *for instruction in righteousness*, to make us do better. And that (I may add) not only by its precepts, but by its examples: examples which strongly excite and quicken us to our duty; and which mightily deter and withhold us from doing wickedly. I shall only mention some of the latter sort, which are drawn up to my hand by St. Paul in the next epistle, 1 Cor. x., where he sets before that church the example of the ancient Israelites: *with many of whom God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness*, after he had brought them out of the bondage of Egypt, ver. 5. And lest they should think themselves unconcerned in such stories, he adds, ver. 6—11: *Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let*

us tempt Christ, as some of them tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. So he concludes, after the same manner as he began, this pathetical discourse; which we ought to lay to heart, and apply to ourselves as much as if he had told us in other words (which are but an explication of these,) "I would not willingly have you abuse yourselves with false opinions; and therefore do not imagine, I beseech you, that these things which were done so long ago do not belong to you; or that the sins I have mentioned are not so deadly now as they were then: because those dreadful miracles are ceased, and you see no devouring fire, no earth gaping to swallow you up, no fiery serpents nor destroying angel smiting multitudes dead in an instant. For *all these things*, that is, these punishments, *happened unto them*, or were inflicted upon the old Israelites, *for examples* (or for types, as it is in the margin) of that punishment which (notwithstanding God's wonderful grace to us, in delivering us out of a worse slavery than that of Egypt) shall fall more heavily upon us than upon them, if we be disobedient to him. The reason is, because we are a diviner and more spiritual people, of whom they were but the types and figures; and therefore can less expect to be indulged in such wickedness as they smarted so sorely for; but ought to be warned by their sad examples, and to look upon these things as recorded *for our admonition;* that we may learn, i. e. to beware of such sins as those now mentioned, which are far more provoking now than they were in former times.

But to this those Manichees object (as we find in the forementioned Faustus[r]) that there are abundance of evil examples in the Old Testament; which, they fancy, justifies the second part of this proposition, That the old Scriptures teach things contrary to good manners. For we find in the lives of the patriarchs and prophets some things not only blameable, but very wicked; as the drunkenness of Noah, the incest of Lot, the murder and adultery of David, and such like.

To which I have a plain and true answer; that even from

[r] August. l. xxii. cap. 1. contra Faust. [tom. viii. col. 363.]

the recording of these things we may learn very much, if we will read such parts of the holy Scripture, as we ought to do all the rest, with a piously disposed mind. I shall mention four things that those examples teach us, if we be inclined to make a good use of them. 1. Something to confirm our faith. 2. Something to guide the course of our lives. 3. Something to preserve us from sin. And, 4. Something to recover us, in case we fall into it.

I. First, I say, they may serve very much to confirm our faith, and to make us less doubt of the truth of the history of the Bible. Which, it is manifest, was not invented for the honour and credit of the Jewish nation, because it faithfully relates even the foulest blemishes of their noble ancestors; which, if it had been indited by their private spirit, should have been carefully concealed. The holy books may be compared to a pure looking-glass; which shows not only the beauty, the lovely features and comely proportions of those persons that are represented in it, but all their spots and deformities. They flatter no man's person, but praise all the actions, even of bad men, which are worthy of commendation; and reprehend all that are otherwise, even in the good and virtuous. And therefore,

II. We may learn something from these examples for the guidance of our lives, and reforming our manners; which is, to follow precepts, not examples. For examples then alone are imitable, when they are conformable to those rules which make them good examples. The best of men may err; and therefore we are not so much to mind which way they go, as which way they ought to go. For there is a rule, by which they are as much bound to walk as we; from which if they swerve, we are to leave them, and stick to that. For against a rule no examples can be a sufficient warrant. They are so far from having any such authority, that we are to examine whether the rule itself, by which holy men heretofore governed their actions, was a general rule, or only particular. For if it was special and personal, there it must rest; and the example of those who obeyed it must not carry it any further. If it do, we act by our own private authority, and apply to ourselves things that belonged peculiarly to other men; and so, doing such things as they did, without such a warrant, involve our-

selves in a guilt of which they were innocent. In short, they that do not live regularly themselves cannot be a rule to others.

III. But there is still a good use which we may and ought to make of such irregular examples. From which we may learn something that will be a preservative from sin, not an incentive to it; and that is, deep humility, a pious fear, with due caution and circumspection, distrust of ourselves and of our own strength, with earnest applications to God for his gracious assistance, and a lively faith and confidence in him, as our best security. For if such great, such holy men fell, and fell so foully, and bruised themselves so sorely, have not we just cause to be jealous of ourselves, and to live in a godly fear, lest we also be tempted, and carried away from our steadfastness? As we shall be most certainly, unless we be careful and cautious, watchful and diligent; adhering closely to God by a constant vigorous sense of him preserved in our minds: which we should learn to awaken and quicken by frequent reflection upon such lamentable examples of human weakness and frailty.

IV. From which also we may learn, in case we should be so unhappy as to be surprised, and fall into sin, something that may help to recover and restore us. Which is, not to despair of God's mercy; but to hope, by unfeigned repentance, and greater care for the future, we may obtain a pardon, and be accepted again into his favour, as they were; some of whose repentance is as remarkable, in the ancient story, as their sin.

This is the use we ought to make of such parts of the holy writings: by which if we will encourage ourselves to be bold to do wickedly, because such pious men fell into sin; or to presume of God's mercy, though we continue in it, and do not rise again by repentance; or take occasion to despair of doing better, because of the deplorable weakness of human nature; we must be accountable to God for such perverse abuse of his holy word, which contains no such examples among all those that it propounds to our imitation.

V. There is one thing more remaining, which if they could have made good, would have been an objection indeed, and that is, that the Old Testament opposes and contradicts the New. About this Adimantus a Manichee, the master of Faustus, wrote a whole book: but the instances he alleges are so frivo-

lous, that they are scarce worth the confuting. I will mention one, because it may suggest something for our learning, whereby you may judge of all the rest. "In the Old Testament we read, that if any man hurt his neighbour, he was bound to satisfy to the full for the damage done, by suffering the very same himself; *Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, and foot for foot*[s], *&c.* But our Saviour says in the New Testament, *Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if a man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also*[t]. Are not these things opposite?" I answer with St. Austin, who hath made an excellent reply to this cavil, both in his book against Adimantus[u] and against Faustus[x], to this effect. "These things discover no contrariety in the two Testaments, but only the different degrees of their perfection. For there being two degrees of meekness and forbearance; the first, that the grief of the injured person do not provoke him to seek a revenge beyond the measure of the damage that was done him; the second, that the injured person pardon and pass by the whole wrong, though grievous to him, with a peaceable and appeased mind: the Old Testament, as less perfect, preserved carnal men within the bounds of the first degree of patience, and kept them from extending their revenge too far; but the New Testament, as more perfect, advances spiritual men to the most excellent degree of a plenary remission, without any revenge at all."

So that even from such passages as these we learn, you see, how much we are indebted to God for a greater abundance of his grace than he bestowed in former times. Which should raise us, as to a greater degree of grateful love to him, so to a more excellent degree of piety and virtue; to which he intends to improve us by this new revelation he hath made of his good will to us in Christ Jesus.

And that is part of the use we may make of what hath been said.

If we may learn so much from those books which were written aforetime, in the days of old, before the coming of our Saviour into the world; what may we do from those which

[s] Exod. xxi. 24, 25.
[t] Matth. v. 39, 40.
[u] Cap. viii. [tom. viii. col. 119.]
[x] Lib. xix. cap. 25. [tom. viii. coll. 327, 8.]

were written since his appearing, who is the very Wisdom of God, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, and hath declared him unto us? They prescribe us a more rational service of Almighty God; and raise us to a higher pitch of brotherly love; and teach us greater purity of body and mind; and press all these upon us by more perfect examples, and by more excellent motives; especially by the blessed hope of immortal life; which, if we have any sense of our own dearest interest, we ought to "embrace and to hold fast," (as it is in the collect for this day,) being willing to do and to suffer any thing that God would have us, rather than lose so great, so incomparable a good: which the more we think of, the more it attracts us to it, and holds us fast in its embraces, as a perfect satisfaction to all our desires.

But from that consideration we may take occasion also to reflect how injurious they are to Christian people, (to whom God hath been so bountiful,) who forbid them without their leave to meddle with these holy books, wherein their hope of immortal life is contained; nay, make a severe inquisition after them that dare be so bold as to have in their own language a copy of the will and testament of their blessed Saviour, (or, if you please so to call it,) of that deed of grace whereby he hath conveyed to them the eternal inheritance. St. Peter, indeed, honours all Christians so much as to call them *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*[y]. But they who pretend to succeed him use them as if they were no better than base slaves, nay, vile beasts; who are not fit to be entrusted with this liberty, and enjoy the privilege of hearing God himself speaking to them in his holy gospel. No, there is a caution in the law, saith Innocent the Third, *that if a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned:* from thence concluding that the simple and unlearned should not meddle with the subtilty of holy writ. And herein we agree with him, that from all subtilties and curious inquiries everybody ought to abstain: but we are not satisfied that he, or any man else, hath authority to compare the people of God to beasts. As others among them have done in a most scornful manner; when they prove from hence that the people must not read the Scrip-

[y] 1 Pet. ii. 9.

tures, because we must not *cast that which is holy to dogs, nor throw pearls before swine.* This is very rude language, but the authors are well known who have spoken thus contemptuously of the flock of Christ, (whom he calls *his sheep*, but they call *dogs* and *swine*,) and thereby debased Christians below the most blockish Jews, who did never so abuse their holy books as to forfeit the liberty of reading of them; which they challenge and use as a right belonging to all at this very day. What reason can be given for such unworthy treatment of those whom the apostles so highly esteemed, and spake of with so much respect, but only this; that they see there is such a manifest disagreement between them and the Scriptures, that their errors would be in danger to be detected by the simplest people if they should be permitted to come into this light?

And here let me note that such guides are fallen into a contrary error to that of the Manichees, of which I have now treated. They do not say that the books of the Old Testament are superfluous and unnecessary; but that they, and the books of the New Testament to boot, are defective and imperfect: and that their defects must be supplied out of such traditions as they propound to our belief. But among opposite errors the causes of erring are commonly the same, as the great philosopher observes; and is very true in this case. For though there be several ways the enemy of mankind hath taken to compass his design of bringing the Scriptures into disgrace, and setting up the inventions of men instead of them, or in conjunction with them; yet the reason still is one and the same: which is, that the holy Scriptures are not for his turn; he cannot deceive men so easily if they keep close to this hold. Which is a stronghold indeed, and comprehends all that we need to know, or believe, or do; to which nothing need, nothing ought to be added as necessary to our salvation. According to that peremptory resolution of St. Austin in his third book against Petilian's letters (chap. vi.[z]): "Whether it be about Christ, or about his church, or about any other thing whatsoever that belongs to faith or to our life, I will not say we, (who are by no means to be compared with him that said, *licet si nos*, 'although we,') but, as he presently adds, "if an angel from heaven shall declare to you any thing besides that which you

[z] [Tom. ix. col. 301 E.]

have received in *Scripturis legalibus et evangelicis*, 'in the Scriptures of the law and the gospel,' let him be accursed."

To which let me add this notable sentence of St. Basil the Great, who comprehends all that I have said in a few words in his sermon of Faith[a]: "It is a manifest falling of faith, and may be justly charged with pride, either to reject any thing that is written, or to introduce and bring in over and above any thing that is not written."

This was the ancient catholic doctrine, which it is the interest (let me take the boldness to say) as well as the duty of Christian kings and princes above all other men to assert and maintain. For by these holy books their authority is as strongly supported, as by the pretended traditions of the Roman church it is notoriously undermined and subverted. Upon which account it is a point of their greatest wisdom not only to keep these books in their people's hands, but to encourage, nay, command the conscientious reading of them; that they may there learn how plainly they are taught, and how religiously they are bound to fear, honour, and obey their sovereigns, even though they were pagans; much more when they are Christians. Of which liberty if they suffer their people to be deprived, they shall soon be taught that they owe no further respect to their princes than it pleases the bishop of Rome to allow them: who, from the dignity of a particular bishop and pastor of souls, is raised to be a worldly monarch, above all kings and emperors; by sewing several patches and shreds to the ancient Christian doctrine, under the name of traditions. For nothing is more apparent in history than this, that as the bishop of Rome's greatness increased, so traditions were still more and more multiplied; which in process of time were more recommended than the Scriptures themselves, and more religiously observed.

There is another reason also why princes should keep the holy books open before their subjects' eyes, and suffer no man to shut them and seal them up; because it plainly appears by them that their persons and office are sacred; not a mere human institution, but the ordinance of God by whom kings reign, and by virtue of whose laws they demand obedience.

[a] Tom. ii. p. 251. [ed. Ben. p. 224 D.]

The contrary to this is taught by the pope's creatures, and will soon be obtruded for Christian doctrine if the holy Scriptures be laid aside. Bellarmine, for instance, in his book against Barclay[b], maintains, that their power proceeds not from God, but is the institution of man. Conformable to that memorable maxim of father Binet, in a discourse of his with the famous Casaubon[c] about the business of Garnet, (which he calls the immortal God to witness is true,) that it were better all kings should perish than the seal of confession so much as once be violated; for the authority of kings is by human right, but confession by divine. Which sounds so horridly in all true Christian ears, that it is hard to find any thing more contrary to common reason and to the Holy Scriptures among that *ἐμβρόντητον τῶν Μανιχαίων φύλον*, (as Andræas Cæsariensis calls them[d],) that 'crazed stupid tribe of Manichees,' whose phrensies I have in part represented. But this is not a place to lay open this mystery of iniquity, whereby kings are almost dethroned, and manifestly deprived of that which assures their crowns and their lives, far more than the constant guard of their bodies, or the most powerful armies they can raise. For though by those they may strike terror into their subjects' minds, it is only the sense of God that can frame their hearts to obedience. Then the fidelity of subjects will be firm and unmovable, when it is incorporated into piety and accounted a part of religion, a necessary piece of that service which we owe to God Almighty. For which end the Scriptures must lie open before the people, that there they may read their duty and have their souls moulded into a sense of God; and not merely receive such impressions as the interests of men shall be pleased to stamp upon them.

I conclude all with those notable words of St. Chrysostom in his second Homily upon St. Matthew[e]; where he justifies what I have said from the words of St. Paul before mentioned. "It is a great fault in Christian people that they do not read the Scriptures; but to think it is a needless and superfluous thing to read them, is a far greater crime. This is language of the

[b] [Cap. 12. tom. vii. col. 903.]
[c] Epist. ad Frontonem Ducæum, p. 209. [p. 140. 4to, Lond. 1611.]
[d] Cap. iv. in Apocalypsen. [ad calc. Œcum. tom. ii. p. 680 B.]
[e] [Tom. vii. p. 32 A.]

devil's invention; for do you not hear what St. Paul says, that *these things were written for our instruction?*"

God grant we may in such wise hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may bring forth fruit with patience, and do our duty so faithfully to Him, to our sovereign, to one another, and to all men, that in the end we may attain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be given, by us and by all others, all honour, glory, and praise, both now and for evermore. Amen.

CHRIST'S COUNSEL TO HIS CHURCH.

IN TWO SERMONS

PREACHED

AT THE TWO LAST FASTS;

ONE, APRIL XI. MDCLXXIX.

THE OTHER, DEC. XXII. MDCLXXX.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM

EARL OF BEDFORD,

KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, &c.

MY VERY GOOD LORD AND PATRON.

MY LORD,

BEING desired by some in my parish to print the sermon I preached on the last fast-day, I found it necessary to prefix to it the sermon I preached the fast before, because this depends on that; and have presumed to prefix your lordship's name to both, because it is by your favour and patronage that I preached either the one or the other in that place.

The matter of them is suitable to the occasion: for in the first I have chiefly pressed the general remedy of all the evils under which we labour; in the second one particular remedy; and in both exposed the wickedness of popery. But I have shown withal, that all we say against it will not keep it out; unless we will so duly prize our own religion as to live according to it. Which being in the general allowed, even by those who continue to live quite contrary, I see no reason why anybody should quarrel with what I have said about one particular duty of our religion; unless they think that we have nothing to answer for upon the account of our contempt of Christ's ministers, and of that order which he hath appointed in his church: which seems to me such a dangerous sin, that I could not think I discharged a good conscience, if at such a time and such an occasion I took no notice of it.

Wherein I do not plead our own cause, as some are wont to object to such discourses, but the cause of Christ and of his religion: which now lies a bleeding, and we fear a dying, by the wounds we give it ourselves through the subtle contrivance of our Romish adversaries. Whose plots have been many and horrid, but their first and greatest strength (as appears by the directions given to their emissaries) lay in this, to bring the whole ministry of the church of

England into contempt; and to divide the people from their established pastors, into a great many little bodies, under no government but what they themselves pleased. And it is apparent that by the same popish artifices this poisonous conceit is industriously infused into the people's mind, that we are looking towards Rome, if we do but tell them that they ought not to form opinions as they think good, but guide themselves in their judgment by our direction.

But I hope the better sort are not ignorant, by this time, of their devices; and that though there be some in the ministry who are not so fit as they should be to direct and guide their flocks, yet they will consider, that the men who most complain of it are such as will be guided by none at all; no, not by those whose ability and honesty cannot be suspected. And it is a very great truth also, that their intemperate speeches against the clergy is the thing that hath frighted the weaker sort of them into such an apprehension of danger from those men, as hath made them guilty of the follies which have done great injury to us all.

This, my lord, is the grief of all good men among us who consider the state we are in, and desire the safety, or have any love for the honour of our religion. For we seem now to be in such a condition as Gregory Nyssen describes in his days; when things were come to such a pass, that the people neither understood themselves, from their own inward sense, what was fit for them, nor would believe those that rightly informed them. "No," saith he[a], "we are exceeding angry at our teachers, and very hardly bear their admonitions: their counsels are a grievance; and their instruction in good things we nauseate, as sick men do the medicines which their physicians exhibit to them. If a reproof be given, we take it heavily; if we hear a rougher word, we fall into a rage; if we be thrust out of the church, we blaspheme. This is not the disposition of learners, nor the obedience of disciples, but the ambitious contention of seditious and rebellious people. For a scholar who desires to learn any common art or science ought to be like a little child: much more ought he to be like a sucking infant, who would be instructed in Christian piety; because our Lord hath honoured that age, as apt to receive impressions, with his commendation.

"Now no child rises up against the characters and the lineaments that his master makes for him in wax; nor devises new elements, by a frantic license innovating about making letters: but exercises his

[a] Tom. ii. p. 745. Περὶ τοὺς ἀχθομένους τῆς ἐπιτιμήσεως. [ed. Morell. tom. iii. p. 313.]

hand after his master's copy, and both in word and deed imitates what his director delivers to him, &c. But a Christian doth not thus, though he hath heard that *except ye be converted, and become like little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven:* but when the priest severely corrects his error, openly contradicts, and mutters between his teeth, and going round the streets, and the places of public concourse, rails and reviles, and (as it follows a little after) sits judging even me, the bishop, in the chair of the scorner."

Now what can the end of such things be but utter confusion? which necessarily follows, when the unity that ought to be between the pastors and people is quite dissolved; or the people (some upon one account, some upon another) lose all their respect for them and love to them for their work's sake.

There hath been much speech, your lordship knows, of a prophecy (as it is called) of bishop Usher, late primate of Armagh, which hath very much startled many, and made them fear dreadful things [b];

[b] [The sagacity of the great primate seems to have enabled him to anticipate impending political events with so great an amount of accuracy in certain cases, as popularly to have invested him with a character for inspired vaticination; to which, after his decease, his chaplain, Dr. Bernard, did his best to contribute. In a sermon preached as early as the year 1603 he was considered to have predicted the outbreak in Ireland, which took place in 1641. (Elrington's Life of Ussher, p. 22.) Still more importance and solemnity came to be attached to similar presentiments which he was currently reported to have let fall in private in his later days, foreboding calamities of the direst character to church and state. Persuaded as he seems to have been of the speedy restoration of the monarchy, he may well have been led to anticipate, from the young king's education abroad, the revival of Romanism under foreign influence at court; together with a more general reaction of the popular mind in the same direction, when the nation should have revolted from the hard and bitter fruits of the puritanic teaching. The papists, so ran the prediction, were destined to regain more than their former ascendancy, and to inflict the most savage persecutions upon the protestant churches, not of England alone, but of all Europe.

Considerable alarm seems to have been created, at the critical time when war with France seemed imminent, in the year 1678, by the publication of a curious little tract of eight pages in *quarto*, in which these prognostications were revived in a more definite shape, and supported by previous instances in which his prophetic foresight had been verified.

It is entitled, "Strange and remarkable predictions of the holy, learned, and excellent James Ussher, late lord archbishop of Armagh, and lord primate of Ireland. Giving an account of his foretelling,

"1. The Rebellion in Ireland forty years before it came to pass.

"2. The confusions and miseries of England in church and state.

"3. The death of king Charles the First.

"4. His own poverty and want.

"5. The divisions in England in matters of religion.

"Lastly, of a great and terrible persecution which shall fall upon the reformed churches by the papists, wherein the then pope should be chiefly concerned.

"Written by the person who heard

though the certainty of it hath not been so publicly attested as that which I have been bold to set down in the first of these sermons: where your lordship will find something that looks like a sad pre-

it from this excellent person's own mouth, and now published earnestly to persuade us to that repentance and reformation which can only prevent our ruin and destruction.

"*And the Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?* Gen. xviii. 17.

"Licensed November the 11th. London, printed for R. G. 1678."

"This holy man," says the anonymous ear-witness, "turning to me and fixing his eyes upon me with that serious and ireful look which he usually had when he spake God's word and not his own, and when the power of God seemed to be upon him, and to constrain him to speak, which I could easily discern much to differ from the countenance wherewith he usually spake to me, he said thus:

"'Fool not yourself with such hopes, for I tell you all you have yet seen hath been but the beginning of sorrows to what is yet to come upon the protestant churches of Christ; who will ere long fall under a sharper persecution than ever yet has upon them; and therefore (said he to me) look you be not found in the outward court, but a worshipper in the temple before the altar: for Christ will measure all those that profess his name, and call themselves his people: and the outward worshippers he will leave out, to be trodden down by the Gentiles. The outward court (says he) is the formal Christian, whose religion lies in performing the outside duties of Christianity, without having an inward life and power of faith, and love uniting them to Christ, and these God will leave to be trodden down and swept away by the Gentiles. But the worshippers within the temple and before the altar, are those who do indeed worship God in spirit and in truth, whose souls are made his temples, and he is honoured and adored in the most inward thoughts of their hearts, and they sacrifice their lusts and vile affections, yea, and their own wills to him: and these God will hide in the hollow of his hand, and under the shadow of his wings. And this shall be one great difference between this last and all the other preceding persecutions; for in the former, the most eminent and spiritual ministers and Christians did generally suffer most, and were most violently fallen upon: but in this last persecution these shall be preserved by God as a seed to partake of that glory which shall immediately follow and come upon the church, as soon as ever this storm shall be over; for as it shall be the sharpest, so it shall be the shortest persecution of them all; and shall only take away the gross hypocrites and formal professors, but the true spiritual believers shall be preserved till the calamity be overpast.'

"I then asked him by what means or instruments this great trial should be brought in. He answered, 'By the papists.' I replied that it seemed to me very improbable they should be able to do it, since they were now little countenanced, and but few in these nations, and that the hearts of the people were more set against them than ever since the Reformation. He answered again, 'that it should be by the hands of papists, and in the way of a sudden massacre; and that the then pope should be the chief instrument of it.'"

The same writer furnishes particulars of similar declarations made by the archbishop to his only daughter lady Tyrrel, and to lady Bysse, the wife of the lord chief baron of Ireland.

Appended to this tract was "Bishop Ussher's second prophesie, wherein is contained divers prophetick sayings for the years 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, which were by him predicted for the said years:" in which he is stated, in a letter ascribed to lady Tyrrel, to have predicted among other events the burning of the city of London.—See Dr. Elrington's life of Ussher, p. 295—298.]

diction, which an excellent divine and holy man of this church published long ago, in a book of his upon the Creed. Which I wish were diligently heeded and laid to heart; because it directs to the way whereby the threatening may be avoided; pointing to the very sin that deserves the judgment he denounces. Which if it be slighted, when we are told of it, it will be one of the worst signs that can be his prognostication will prove true and be fulfilled.

But they who are appointed to stand on the watch-tower, and give notice of danger, have delivered their own souls, when they have faithfully declared the mind of Christ in this matter. Which was the greatest motive I had both to preach and to print these sermons; which I am sure will be acceptable to your lordship, not only because you have a due respect to God's ministers, but because I present them as a token of my gratitude, and of the honour I have for your lordship, being,

My lord,

Your most humble servant,

S. PATRICK.

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FAST-DAY,

APRIL 11, 1679[a].

REVELATION ii. 16.

Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

WHAT our Saviour had said unto the Jews before his death, (in the second lesson for this morning prayer[b],) *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;* he saith here (in effect) after his ascension to heaven, unto the Gentile Christians, *Repent, or else I will come quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

This is a lesson for all nations, and for all ages; in which the church of England is as much concerned now as the church of Pergamus was then. Though this letter was not particularly directed unto us, no more than to the rest of the Christian world; yet the next words tell us that our Lord expects everybody should take notice of it, consider it, and take warning by it, as much as if it had been addressed to them by name: *He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*[c]. We all herein read our own doom, and ought to understand the words as if our Lord had enlarged them in such a general admonition as he gives in another case about watching[d]: *And what I say unto the church of Pergamus, I say unto all, Repent.*

Repent, or else I will come quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

[a] [The fasts, on which this and the following sermon were preached, were occasioned by the imaginary popish plot, denounced by Oates and his confederates.]

[b] Luke xiii. 3, 5.

[c] Rev. ii. 17.

[d] Mark xiii. ult.

In which words you may easily discern an exhortation to a most necessary duty, which is, *to repent;* and a commination in case the exhortation be not obeyed, which is, a denunciation of war against such obstinate offenders, who provoke him to sharpen against them the sword of his mouth.

The exhortation is so frequently pressed, and as frequently explained, that I cannot think it fit to spend the time in telling you what it is to repent. For you all know well enough, that it is such a godly sorrow for what we have done amiss as makes us not only afflict ourselves for our sins, but utterly renounce and forsake them.

If you know your baptismal vow (as who is there that can be unacquainted with it, unless he affect a stupid and brutish ignorance?), it is easy to understand that nothing less than this can pass with God for repentance.

If we had never broken that vow, there would have been no need of repentance, which is the repairing of that breach, and the making it up again. And how shall we make all whole, but only by observing that vow better which we have violated and broken? No man of sense can think there is any other way of being reconciled to God after we have offended him, but only by becoming more dutiful to him; performing, that is, those engagements which we always had to him, and from which we can never be absolved; because, beside our natural obligation, we have tied and bound ourselves by a solemn and most sacred vow to be his faithful servants. When we do not keep this vow we sin, and bring a heavy guilt upon ourselves. From which sin and guilt if we would be freed, we must repent; that is, keep our vow better, forsaking the devil and all his works; heartily believing God's holy word; and obediently keeping his commandments. If we be truly sorrowful and afflicted that we have not done thus, in which repentance begins; we must resolve and seriously endeavour to make this our business hereafter; in which repentance ends and is completed.

I shall say no more in so plain a business, which hath been urged upon you a thousand times; not by one alone, but by all God's ministers that ever you heard preach about it. And what theme is there more common, that comes oftener into the pulpits? I wish the perpetual sound of it, without due regard,

have not made it become so ineffectual, that now men turn a deaf ear to such discourses as beaten and threadbare subjects, to which they need not give any attendance. But if any man have an ear still open, let him *hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches* here in this book. Let him hear, at least, what a desperate course he runs, if he continue to neglect a duty which is so well known, that he thinks he need not hear of it any more. For our Saviour threatens such as would not repent, that he would *come unto them quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.*

The first motive, you know, to a change, is commonly an apprehension of the danger of that course wherein a man is at present engaged. This is apt to put a stop unto him in his way, and bring him to a stand. The very first sight of it, when it smites his soul, is wont to repress the violence and heat wherewith he pursues his sinful desires. A new scene of thoughts begin to appear in his mind; and he is led to consider with himself, "Whither am I going? What mischief is this which threatens me? Whither will this course carry me? And what will be the end of these things?" And if the danger be very great and pressing, and his apprehension of it also be great and proportionable to the danger, this strikes the greater fear and dread into his soul. And fear of what will ensue disposes him to a change and alteration of his course of life, that he may escape those miseries which he sees he is drawing upon himself. Especially if he be persuaded (as you have often heard) that no terrors or affrightments, no entreaties or prayers, no cries or tears, no sadness or affliction of spirit, no outward humiliation or abasements, no purposes, no promises will prevail for his deliverance from that danger, without an effectual reformation and forsaking those wicked ways that necessarily lead to death and destruction.

And it is no hard matter, one would think, for men to convince themselves of this truth. For suppose you were in a journey, and you should be told of, nay, should see a great pit or precipice, to which, and no whither else, that road did directly lead, would you think of any other means to avoid it but only by turning into another path? Though you should quiver and tremble like a leaf when it is shaken with the wind, though you should conceive the greatest horror, and offer never

so many prayers and vows, nay, though you turned your faces about and looked the contrary way; yet if still you should proceed and go forward in that road, you would most certainly hurl yourselves (though you turned your backs of it and were loath to see it) into inevitable ruin. This is exactly the case of every sinner; who, besides that his way is uneasy and rugged, putting him to a great deal of pain, and costing him many a fall, hath the pit of hell, a bottomless pit of destruction, which burns with fire and brimstone, set evidently before his eyes; nay, is manifestly destroying his body, his estate, his reputation; and, which is more, is linked in a wicked society with those, that by their riot and luxury, profaneness and irreligion, neglect of all things but their sottish pleasures, are bringing the country wherein they live to utter ruin; putting, as I may say, an ancient kingdom and famous church into most lamentable confusion, in the midst of which they are all like to perish. It is a foolish thing for any of them to imagine they can avoid it, because perhaps they sometimes dread it, and shiver at the thoughts of it; because they cry to heaven, when they see the danger, to deliver them from it; or, at every step suppose, fall down on their faces and humble themselves, beseeching God to rescue them from this ruin: nay, put on sackcloth, (though alas! who is there now that is so religious?) and roll themselves in dust and ashes. If when they get up again they still go on and will not forsake their evil way, heaven itself cannot preserve them from destruction, having appointed that fearful end for such obstinate, refractory sinners; who will not be saved unless he make the fire not to burn, and the sea not to drown; that is, alter the very nature of things for the sake of those that deserve so ill of him.

Hoping therefore that every one of you being convinced of this, the representation of the danger of impenitency will, at least, move you to design and begin a change of your lives, I shall treat of that at this time, which is the second part of my text: wherein our blessed Lord threatens that unless the church of Pergamus repented, he would *come quickly to her, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.*

Which words contain in them these four considerations to stir us up to repentance:

I. First, that if men do not amend their lives, especially

after many warnings, clear convictions, and a change wrought in their minds and judgments, it turns the greatest kindness of God into anger and displeasure.

II. That it wearies the very patience and long-suffering of God: to which we are more indebted than we imagine, and should it forsake us, our condition is left very woful.

III. To such persons the most gracious God becomes an enemy.

IV. And accordingly they must expect nothing but the execution of all his threatenings against them.

How all these arise out of the words, will appear in the handling of them.

I.

First, I say that not to amend after God hath often called and persuaded us to it, nay, convinced us of the necessity of it, turns his greatest kindness into anger and displeasure. If there be no change wrought in your lives, you shall find a sad change in his proceedings, and the methods of his providence towards you. This I gather from that phrase, *I will come unto thee.*

Come unto thee! What better news can there be than this, (would one think,) if he read no further? What more welcome guest can we have than God himself, who is wont in these terms to express his tender love and kindness toward sinners? This is the thing that we pray for and entreat, that the Lord would be pleased to be so gracious as to *come* to our souls. And it is very true; this is the first signification of the phrase, which declares his grace and favour, whereby he is moved to begin a kind treaty with us: suing unto us and beseeching us that he may have our affections; and that we will not dispose of them to any one else but him, that loves us with so much tenderness.

But then behold what obstinate impenitency doth! It puts a stop to these proceedings, and turns the course of divine providence another way. It changes all this love and good will into anger, displeasure, and jealousy. His coming now signifies quite another thing; his appearing is dreadful; his presence is frightful and astonishing: for he comes on another business, not to bless, but to curse; not to bestow favours, but to punish and execute vengeance.

There is a double coming of God our Saviour: one with

offers and tenders of mercy, the other with a rod in his hand to chastise our contempt and abuse of the mercy offered. They that will not receive him in the former way shall be forced to receive him in the latter. Though they may refuse and reject his grace, they shall not be able to defend themselves from the effects of his heavy displeasure.

The very name of our blessed Saviour, if you observe it, was Ὁ Ἐρχόμενος, *He that cometh* [c]. And what did he come for? He himself tells you what his first business was, John x. 10, *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* But when (as he complains) men *would not come unto him that they might have life,* John v. 40, when *he came unto his own, and his own received him not* [d]; then you hear of another sadder coming of his, Revel. i. 7, *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him,* (even they that shut their eyes before, and in their blind rage pierced him, and wounded him to death as a malefactor,) *and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.*

His coming at the first is to invite us to come unto him, Matt. xi. 28, where you may read how he expects that all those souls which groan under their sins, and complain of the heavy load of them, all those who sigh that they have committed them, should be weary of them and throw off the burden, take another course, and come to submit themselves to the yoke of his holy laws. But if they will not be persuaded to this, all their entreaties will never persuade him to save them. His heart will be turned against them, and he would have us mark how much he is displeased at them, what a change and wonderful alteration there is in his design upon them. For, *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him* [e].

And thus the word *visit* in Scripture is differently used: sometimes for God's bringing his blessings to these to whom he is said to come, and sometimes for his laying his stripes on the back of those fools that were insensible of his love. I need not name the places, some of which I alleged the last day of

[c] Matt. xi. 3. [d] John i. 11. [e] Jude 14, 15.

fasting and prayer: and I make mention of all this only to this purpose, that you may see what the effect of impenitency is. If you will not change, God will. Not himself indeed, for he was always thus resolved, but his dealings with you; which you shall not find so favourable to you as they have been. He will not always wait to be so gracious as he is at present, for he is not insensible of all the affronts that impudent sinners put upon him. He will take another course, since they will not; and meet them, as you shall hear presently, after another manner than he was wont to do: making them know what it is to abuse the goodness of their gracious God.

You would have him indeed to change his laws for your sakes; nay, to change himself, and go back with his word; to love those sins which he cannot but hate, and pardon that which he hath told you he will punish: a change which is impossible to be made. But another change every man that goes on still in his trespasses shall find to his cost; a change which he would by no means suffer, but which God hath purposed and decreed, and will not repent; which is, that he will not always strive with men in so much love, but make himself known to them in another way, in tokens of his anger and wrath.

And that now would lead me to the second thing: only before we leave this, let us a little seriously consider it. Have you so much reason to love your sins, that rather than change your lives, you care not though God turn his loving-kindness into displeasure? After your sins have turned the world upside down, and made it such a confused and uncomfortable place as we now find it, do you not care though they reach up unto heaven, and make still a greater alteration there, to our utter destruction? Is it of no concernment in what manner God comes to visit you? Is it all one whether he clothe himself with wrath and put on vengeance, or come as a friend, and make affectionate addresses to your souls? Would you have him that used to knock at the door of your hearts, desiring to come in, and entertain you with festival joys, break in upon you with a dreadful violence, and fill you with the terrors of the Lord, with an amazed conscience, with benumbing fears, with ghastly apprehensions of the wrath to come, with the beginnings of hell fire; and that not to turn, but to torment you?

Or can you be content that he should come against this sinful nation, to *break down what he hath built up, and to pluck up that which he hath planted,* as Jeremiah speaks of his country [f]? Or would it be as welcome a sound as any other to hear such a cry as that in the prophet Joel, *The day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness* [g]*?* wherein he will come to lash us with the severest scourge of all other, for the abuse of the light of his glorious gospel, for the despisal of his messengers, and our slighting all his benefits, and continuing incorrigible under his judgments.

O do not presume that you shall never see such a dismal time, because he hath not yet made you so miserable. Do not put away far from you this evil day; nor imagine you shall always hear nothing but his kind invitations and his loving entreaties, his good motions and his gracious promises. If you will not be persuaded by them to turn unto him, he will turn away from you and set himself against you; he will not always strive in vain with you, but resolve at last (though much against his first design) to abandon such stiffnecked sinners, and pronounce such a sentence on them as that in the prophet, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies* [h]. And that is the next consideration.

II.

A continued course of sin doth in conclusion weary the patience and tire the longsuffering of our most merciful and indulgent Lord and Master. For he says here in my text, *I will come unto thee quickly.* There is a time when he will bear no longer, but bring the controversy to a speedy issue, in the ruin and destruction of those that oppose him.

Now though there are many signs mentioned in Scripture of an approaching ruin, yet I shall name but two. The first is, when men have been not only often rebuked for their sins, but convinced of their guilt and danger, and have had their hearts set against them, and yet will not amend. For which we have the known maxim of the wise man, *He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and*

[f] Jer. xlv. 4. [g] Joel ii. 1. [h] Isaiah i. 24.

that without remedy[k]. This is a mortal mark upon that person: a token of a plague of the heart so incurable, that nothing is to be expected but a sudden death; which will seize on such men, if not presently, yet on a sudden as to them; in a moment when they look not for it, but think themselves in peace and safety. Thus it was in the days of Noah; and thus it was at our Saviour's coming to destroy his crucifiers; and thus we see it ofttimes with our eyes, or hear of it with our ears, that the confident and the merry sinner is in an instant cut off, and goes down into the pit.

But secondly, the condition of impenitent persons is never more dangerous, than when they remain unreformed after many punishments have been inflicted on them by divers strokes of the rod of God. Which seems to be supposed in those words of our Saviour, in his letter to the last of these churches, *As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent*[l]. As if he had said, When I would do good to men's souls, as long as I have any hope of them, I correct and afflict them, that I may reduce them to obedience. It concerns you therefore highly to stir up yourselves to repent in good earnest of those sins for which you have smarted much already; for there are no means to be used after these, but you must perish if they do not prevail upon your hearts. And this reason the prophet Isaiah gives of the utter desolation which was coming upon Israel. *For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day*[m]. To which many places might be added out of the prophet Jeremiah; but one shall suffice. *Therefore thou shalt speak these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call upon them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth*[n]. That is to say, it is to no purpose to speak to them any more. Thou mayest preach and bestow thy labour upon them; but there will be no fruit of it. And therefore all that I have further to command thee is to pronounce

[k] Prov. xxix. 1. [l] Rev. iii. 19. [m] Isaiah ix. 13, 14. [n] Jer. vii. 27, 28.

this judgment upon them; that they are a people who will not be moved to their duty, either by my word or by my correction; and therefore I give them over, as having no hope they will ever be reclaimed. *Cut off thy hair, O Jerusalem,* (in token of mourning, that is,) *and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.* So it follows there, ver. 29, to the terror of future generations, who should read this doleful sentence upon those who had once been very dear to God, but were now, by reason of their obstinate wickedness, become good for nothing but to be made examples to all posterity of his sorest displeasure.

And now, my brethren, what do you think when you bring these things nearer home? Are neither of these signs and tokens of speedy vengeance to be found upon the sinners of this nation? Or rather, do we not see both these marks of our Lord's coming quickly to reckon with us for our abuse of his long patience and forbearance of us? Have you not been often reproved, and felt the light of God pierce into your very hearts? Hath he not made you see the evil of your ways, and so powerfully bowed and inclined your wills towards him as to make you resolve to become better men? Hath he not also humbled this nation by his mighty hand, and sent more plagues than one to call us to repentance? First, he made us sigh and groan under the miseries of a war; and then under those of a sore pestilence, which quickly, and, as in a moment, smote down thousands of us, and laid them in their graves. After which a dreadful fire quickly followed, which was attended with that most disgraceful attempt which our enemies made upon our ships, the bulwarks of this land: and with many calamities since of another sort, which have almost dissolved the bonds of society, and destroyed that mutual confidence which ought to be between our prince and his people, and endangered our religion and liberties, and brought us into such a condition, that we scarce know which way to extricate ourselves out of those perplexities in which our sins have entangled us.

What should every one of us then do, who still survive the war, the plague, and all the rest of God's judgments, but speed our repentance and amendment of life? You may think, per-

haps, that the danger is now over, after so many punishments; but, in truth, there is greater danger than ever, if you still go on to provoke the Lord to jealousy. For what should he do with a people but cast them off, who will not be turned, no, not by such a mighty hand and outstretched arm, from their wicked courses? What our Saviour saith concerning those whom Pilate slew, together with their sacrifices, and on whom the tower in Siloam fell, *Suppose ye that those Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things; or those eighteen the greatest sinners in Jerusalem, because the tower fell on them and killed them* [o], &c.; the same may I say to you with a small alteration: Think you that those men who were slain in the late wars were sinners above all the people of England, because they were cut off, and left you alive? *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall also perish.* Or those eighty or ninety thousand that fell by the plague, think you that they were sinners above all men that dwell in London and Westminster? *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall also perish.* The time will come when you shall also be called to an account for your impenitency, if you still go on in it: and who knows how near that time may be? In all likelihood it will come the more speedily if we take no warning, neither by God's word nor by his rod. Therefore I beseech you quickly, before it be too late, to hearken to that voice which saith, *Return, return, O ye backsliding children.* If ever you mean to return, return now unto me, saith the Lord: and if you will put away your abominations out of my sight, then shall you be settled in peace and prosperity.

Consider that parable which St. Luke there adds, and read a description of your own condition, vers. 6, 7, 8. You are a people planted as in a garden of God; whose gospel is not only come to you, but hath stayed long with you. He hath taken great care of you, and hath dressed and pruned you, that you might bring forth the fruit which the knowledge of Christ ought to produce. Many showers of his grace have fallen upon you, and you have long felt the warm beams of the Sun of righteousness to make you fruitful. And therefore think also with yourselves, that he hath come many years *seeking fruit*, and expecting to see some good grow out of all

[o] Luke xiii. 1, 2, 3.

this care and cost of his love. But alas! what hath he found when he came to visit you? May he not complain as he doth there, *I have come these three years* (or rather, one three year after another, many times told over) *seeking fruit, and find none?* Is it not a wonder then that he hath not pronounced the sentence upon us which there follows, *Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?* Is it not the greater wonder, seeing so many others have had this heavy doom passed upon them? O admire at the patient and long-suffering kindness of God, which hath interposed on your behalf, and moved him to *let you alone* both that year and this year also. First, in *that* year, I mean that fatal year of cutting down, and casting out of the vineyard; when so many thousands perished in the late dreadful mortality. And now I may add in *this* year also, this remarkable year; when the axe was in a manner laid to the root of the tree: our enemies, I mean, had laid a deep design strongly grounded and closely carried on, to cut us off and destroy both root and branch; and, for any thing we know, in one day. For that there now is, and hath been for divers years last past, a horrid and treasonable plot and conspiracy contrived and carried on by those of the popish religion, for the murdering of his majesty's sacred person, and for subverting the protestant religion, and the ancient and established government of this kingdom, is become now, in effect, the sense of the whole nation: the lords and commons in parliament assembled having declared in a resolve of theirs, *nemine contradicente*, (upon March 25 last past,) that they are fully satisfied, by the proofs they have heard, of the truth of it.

And considering their industrious endeavours to conceal it, even now that it is discovered, (whereas in reason they should be the most zealous of all other men, were they innocent, to have it thoroughly examined,) their strong confederacies and steadfast combinations, their many oaths of secresy, and obstinate resolution to stick to the design and to each other; it is a wonder that it hath not been effected, and that sudden destruction hath not come upon us, as pain upon a woman in travail.

But let us not content ourselves merely with admiration of his amazing providence over us, which hath prolonged a while (we know not for how long or short a time) the season of grace unto us; let us not presume to abuse this patience, (for

so we are to esteem it, not a perfect deliverance,) nor be so foolish as to imagine that it will last always: but think with ourselves rather, that *the Lord of the vineyard* may, it is possible, have resolved, after this year, or in some short space, after this new husbandry of his, and such extraordinary pains and care to save us, that we shall be cut down indeed, if we will not bring forth fruit worthy of the gospel. And therefore, looking upon this as the day wherein you may know and improve the things belonging to your peace, *be zealous*, as our Lord exhorts, *and repent;* be quick and speedy, active and diligent in this weighty business, now in this your day, lest you never have such an opportunity again, but miserably perish in your sins.

Consider, I beseech you, do you not pray to God continually (if you have any sense of religion) that he would quickly dissipate all our fears, by laying more and more open, and then utterly defeating all the wicked contrivances of our enemies against us? Do you not think that he stays very long before he bring to light the very bottom of the plot, and make their treasons so visible to all the world that none may be able to gainsay it? Do you not think there is reason to tremble (when you seriously reflect upon it), to see in what a lamentable, unsettled, and naked condition we are; in danger to be overrun with foreign enemies, should they make an attempt upon us? Are you not all therefore ready to say, *Lord, make haste to help us; make no tarrying, O our God?* O my beloved, say the same to yourselves, for there is the stop. Labour and prevail with your own souls that they would make haste, that they would make no tarrying, but instantly turn to God in works meet for repentance, that so both his present judgments may be removed, and worse prevented.

I know nothing that can hinder the entertainment of this reasonable motion, unless it be this, that men see there is not always such a speedy course taken with sinners, and therefore they presume God will still bear with them. For they themselves have lived and sinned many years, and have escaped many dangers; and though they have been affrighted sometimes with such sermons as this, yet they were worse scared than hurt. Still all things are as they were, they are very well and prosperous, they have all that their hearts desire:

and therefore their hearts grow hard, and they suppose they are in no sudden danger.

In answer to this I shall say nothing but what is contained in the third consideration here in my text, which is,

III.

That all impenitent persons, as they oppose God, so they have God for their enemy; and he will set himself in opposition to them. For he tells this church, that if they will not repent he will fight against them: which denotes that he would become their adversary, and look upon them as rebels, nay, as irreconcilable enemies, who will never submit to his divine government, which is concerned therefore to destroy them. So that these impenitent wretches, who go on resolvedly in their sins notwithstanding all that he can do to reclaim them, gain but little by the patience and lenity of God towards them, and it is but a small comfort that he doth not presently strike them; seeing it is certain, as the Psalmist expresses it, that *he is bending his bow, whetting his sword, and preparing for them the instruments of death.*

Of this I need not say much, nor will the time permit it. It is sufficient to know that sometimes the deferring of execution is a piece of hostility, and makes the blow heavier when it comes. They are but treasuring and heaping up to themselves *wrath against the day of wrath*, (as the apostle speaks[p],) who will not be led by the goodness of God, no, nor his judgments, to repentance; but proceed to add sin to sin, till a most terrible vengeance break out upon them. Which may be deferred perhaps from time to time, but with no other design than a great prince hath, who is so powerful that he can have the better of his enemies when he will, and therefore forbears to fall upon them, not because he means to spare them, but only because he waits for an opportunity when he may do the more terrible execution, and take the severest revenge on those whom he intends to ruin. What do sinful men mean then *to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are they stronger than he?* Will you not fear him because he doth not instantly smite? Shall your hearts be set in you to do evil, because judgment is not always speedily executed against an evil work? Will you

[p] Rom. ii. 4, 5.

dare to offend him as if he could not, or presume upon him as if he would not punish? Let me tell you, he is the more to be feared and dreaded, if you understood yourselves, for this forbearance. He delays to strike, not because he cannot, but because he can when he pleases; not because he will not, but because he will do it at such a time when it will most serve the wisdom of his providence. We are ignorant of all the reasons why God doth not do with all as he doth with some. We know not for what causes they are, that he doth not come so quickly to reckon with one wicked man as with another. It is enough to affright us out of our wicked ways, to know that he looks upon such persons as his enemies, and that he will take the fittest season to come *and wound the head of his enemies, the scalp of him that goeth on still in his trespasses.* For that is the last consideration.

IV.

That such persons as will not repent, being so often admonished, so patiently borne withal, so lovingly chastised and corrected, must expect nothing but the execution of all our Lord's threatenings against obstinate sinners. So he saith, *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* For the understanding of which phrase you must look back to the first chapter of this book, ver. 16, where Christ is represented as having a *sharp sword*, and that *two-edged, going out of his mouth.* The mouth is not the proper place for a sword to be in, which uses to be girded to the thigh, or, when it is unsheathed, to be taken into the hand. By this phrase therefore is described the gracious method of our Lord Christ, who threatens before he strikes. His sword at first is only in his mouth; that is, he declares his vengeance which he will take against the rebellious, and makes proclamation that he will come and destroy them if they do not repent. But if these threatenings and denunciations of vengeance do not prevail, if notwithstanding all his declarations they contemn his authority, and will not stand in awe of him as their Lord and their Judge; he will proceed to do as he hath said, and fight against them, as he tells us here in my text, with this sword, which before he threatened should come upon them to cut them off. Now no man fights with a sword but it is in his hand; and therefore

these words can signify nothing less than that the punishments he had threatened and solemnly denounced should fall upon hardened sinners; and that he would execute what he had resolved, and make good his word, if they took no heed to the warnings he had given them.

Know then, all ye that go on fearlessly in your evil ways, notwithstanding all that we can say from God unto you, that you shall not always hear the mere thunder of terrible words, the sound and noise of wrath and damnation hereafter, of blood and war, of plagues and tumults, and subversions of churches and kingdoms here, (that is, the sword will not always be in his mouth,) but you shall feel in the conclusion the strokes of his heavy displeasure; and he will make you know by dismal effects, that his words are not light and vain which vanish into air, but they remain in everlasting force, and shall all be fulfilled.

Now this sword being two-edged, which cuts on both sides, his fighting with it may denote the execution of his threatenings both upon the bodies and upon the souls of his enemies; whom he punishes ofttimes in their outward as well as in their spiritual estate.

I.

For the first of these, those words are very terrible, which you meet withal in our Saviour's letter to the next church, ver. 21, 22, 23, of this chapter, *I gave her space to repent of her fornication; but she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all her churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.* Which if we apply to ourselves, we cannot deny but that we have been already *in great tribulation:* and what further punishments the righteous Lord hath reserved for us, except we repent, we are not able certainly to tell; but this is sure, that it is not likely there should be any peace to such a wicked people. Our sins are so crying, that they will not suffer us to be quiet, but give us further disturbance, till they have utterly confounded us, unless we will part with these troublers of our Israel, and become more obedient Christians. There have

been innumerable sermons preached and books printed to demonstrate this truth, that all those sins which are now so rife among us, sloth and negligence, luxury and excess, whoredom and adultery, perfidiousness and dishonesty, infidelity or indifference in religion, contempt of all government civil and spiritual, &c., naturally tend unto (and can end in nothing else but) the subversion of those families, and that kingdom and church wherein they reign; besides that the divine justice is concerned to punish them, and will be *avenged*, as the prophet speaks, *of such a nation as this*. And who is there that doth not see there are instruments of divine justice ready at hand, bloody instruments that offer themselves to be employed, and are prepared to do the execution, if our repentance do not move him, by some miraculous providence, to prevent it? The papists I mean, the sworn enemies of our peace and settlement; who, as they want no will, so have behaved themselves as if they thought they did not want power to destroy us. Men of as wicked principles as the father of mischief can invent; of no faith, no justice, no charity, no moderation; (if they be spirited by them who now rule in that church;) but inflamed with a false zeal for God and religion, which will let them stick at no cruelty, no butchery, no treachery or treasonable attempt to compass their desired end. We may say of them, as David doth of his enemies Psalm v. 9, *There is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre, though they flatter with their tongue.* And xxxviii. 19, *Our enemies are lively and strong: they that hate us wrongfully are many in number.* So many, and so industrious and desperately bent to seek our ruin, that *if the Lord had not been on our side, they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.* And we may be sure it is not quenched, but rather more incensed by this disappointment; so that we had need, with serious repentance, earnestly beseech him, in the words of David elsewhere; *Arise, O Lord, disappoint them, and cast them down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is a sword of thine*[q].

Which words teach us that the wicked are one kind of sword, which my text may speak of, wherewith the Lord fights against impenitent sinners; whom he punishes very often by

[q] Psalm xvii. 13.

other sinners like themselves. And there is no sort of punishment that doth such dreadful execution as the *fierceness of man*, if the Lord do not restrain it. We have reason therefore to cry, in the words of Jeremiah, (which we may apply to this business,) *O sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still*[r]. Let us see no more wars, no more bloodshed, no more sheathing our swords in one another's bowels. But then we must add, as it there follows, *How can it be quiet, if the Lord have given it a charge against us, and if here he hath appointed it?* If he resolve this way to punish us, there is no way to escape it (but by repentance); and we cannot imagine how sore a punishment it may prove; for *the tender mercies of the wicked* (saith Solomon, Prov. xii. 10) *are cruel.* Which was never more verified of any sort of wicked men, than of those Jesuited zealots, who are now enraged against us, *and hate us*, as David speaks, Psalm xxv. 19, *with cruel hatred.*

We cannot tell yet how they intended to have treated us now, but we know what they intended, and what they did in former times. Particularly in the year 1588, when Don Pedro de Valdez, a great commander in the Spanish invasion, confessed to the lords of the council, (who examined him after he was taken, what meant those whips of cord and wire wherewith their ships were stored,) that they intended, if they had prevailed, to have whipt us heretics to death. This he answered in a bold manner; and being further asked what they would have done with our young children, replied as boldly, "All above seven years old should have gone the same way with their fathers; the rest should have lived; only we would have branded them in the forehead with the letter L, signifying Lutheran, and reserved them for perpetual bondage." This the relator (Dr. Sharp) takes God to witness he received from two of the greatest lords of the council after his examination, with a commandment to publish it to the queen's army which lay at Tilbury in his next sermon.

It may be objected indeed that this was only an insolent rant of one of those huffing foreigners, who intended, as he professed, not only to subdue our nation, but to root it wholly out: and there cannot be, you may fancy, any so barbarous

[r] Jer. xlvii. 6.

among ourselves that design such a total destruction of us they call heretics. To which I have nothing to say but this, that the ordinary discourse of papists here in former times hath been as bloody and cruel as can be imagined; and we have little reason to think they have less venom now that they have more power by the increase of their numbers. For I find these words in an exposition upon 2 Thess. ii., printed fifty years ago[s], by a famous preacher in the city of London, "Know we not their common threatenings? what they whisper among the common people, what they will do when their day doth come? (Christ grant that their day may never come.) When it shall come, do they not whisper that they will no more hew down the branches, but tear up the very roots of the reformation, rooting out every professor thereof?" Which agrees too plainly with what we read in a late traitor's letters, concerning their hopes now to extirpate that pestilent heresy (as they miscall our holy religion) which hath spread itself through these northern parts of the world. Nor have their practices been unsuitable, as the Irish rebellion alone sufficiently testifies; wherein three hundred thousand souls were sent to the other world, as not fit to live in this, for no other cause but their religion: and it is manifest they then intended to have left none remaining in that country but themselves, if they could have satisfied their bloodthirsty desires.

Which things I remember for no other end but to awaken you to a serious repentance of those sins which have brought us near the brink of the like destruction, lest the Lord deliver us at last into the hands of these tormentors. Whose tyranny is so unsupportable, that should they prevail, the posterity of them who now wish for that woful day would sadly repent of it in future times, and curse the memory of those who brought them into such slavery. Let them but read the complaints and hearken to the groans of their forefathers under the

[s] John Squire, Serm. v. p. 138. ["A plaine exposition upon the first part of the second chapter of saint Paul his second epistle to the Thessalonians; wherein it is plainly proved that the pope is the Antichrist. Being lectures in saint Paul's, by Iohn Squire, priest, and vicar of saint Leonard's, Shordich, sometime fellow of Jesus colledge in Cambridge."—4to, Lond. 1630. John Squire was the son of Dr. Adam Squire, who married a daughter of bishop Aylmer, and caused the bishop much trouble by his dissolute conduct.—Strype's Life of Aylmer, pp. 122, 123.]

Roman bondage, before the reformation of religion, and they may be convinced of their folly, or madness rather, in desiring and endeavouring to return unto it. All the world sighed for deliverance from it, particularly France and Germany and Poland, as we find in the public acts of those countries; who said of the bishop of Rome's tyranny, as St. Peter did of the burden of Jewish ceremonies, that it was *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*. And "among all the authentic records" (to use the words of him that set out the Review of the Council of Trent[t] in our language) "which there are of the pope's usurpation, there are not to be found more woful tragedies of his tyranny, than such as were acted upon our stage. No higher trophies erected to his ambition than here in England. No more rare examples of devout, abused patience, than among us. Till extreme necessity made us despair into courage and fortitude; when the avarice and exactions of Rome having left us nothing else, at last robbed us of our patience." All our histories are full of proofs of this; which may ease me of the labour of relating any of them; nor is this a place so proper for it.

II.

Let me pass rather to the second thing, and turn towards you the other edge of the sword which my text speaks of: which is the executing his threatenings against the souls of the impenitent, and sending upon them spiritual judgments. Which, if we have any sense and feeling, we must think are the most grievous of all other: and here I might represent to you what a dismal thing it would be if you should have your eyes put out once more, and be buried again in the darkness of ignorance and popish superstition; being robbed of your reason, and made to believe the grossest absurdities; and, having no liberty left to examine any thing, be forced to follow blindly whithersoever your blind guides will lead you. For this is the least you can expect, if our inveterate enemies prevail over us. Suppose they should be so kind as not to kill us, nor torment us, nor so much as imprison us; yet they will undoubtedly exercise the greatest severity against our religion, and endeavour

[t] [Preface by Gerard Langbaine, provost of Queen's college, Oxford, to his translation of Ranchin's 'Revision du concile de Trente',—fol. Oxon. 1638.]

to destroy that, though they should spare us. The holy Scriptures must be imprisoned; your understandings and spirits enthralled; the worship of God profaned and corrupted; the idolatry of the mass erected; the very doctrine of repentance poisoned; and all other ways of serving God, but according to their superstition, absolutely prohibited.

We may suffer ourselves to be abused, if we please, with fair words and plausible speeches, wherewith they deceive the hearts of the simple; but whatsoever they say and petition for themselves, when they are under hatches, they are resolved when they have power to give no toleration to any religion but their own. This Ribadeneira (the famous writer of the life of Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits) labours to prove at large in his book of a Christian Prince [u]: "That it is impossible for catholics to unite with heretics in a firm bond of society, and to agree to live together in a peaceable, quiet body of a commonwealth." (Which is worthy our notice and remembrance, and so are his reasons.) "For how can one carry a serpent in his bosom," saith he, "and not be ulcerated by his bitings? or touch pitch, and not be defiled? &c. Or are there more innate and imbred enmities between the wolves and the lambs than there ought to be between catholics and heretics? No," saith he, "the council of Toledo determines that no king hereafter should reign, but before he ascended the throne he should swear, among other things, that he would permit no man who was not a catholic to live in his kingdom," &c. And if this be not sufficient to show what these fathers would be at, (who now are the ruling men in that church,) I might cite others who make it equally dangerous to have two religions in a kingdom, and to have a wife and a whore in one and the same family.

Sometimes indeed they confess the iniquity of the times (as they speak) may be such, that a prince of their religion may be forced to tolerate ours, and solemnly do it by compact and agreement. But then they say again that he, being compelled unwillingly to fall into a guilt, must not willingly fall into ano-

[u] [Princeps Christianus, adversus Nicolaum Machiavellum, ceterosque hujus temporis politicos, a Petro Ribadeneira, nuper Hispanice, nunc Latine a P. Joanne Orano, utroque societatis Jesu theologo editus.—vid. lib. i. cap. 23. pp. 131—8.

ther, by confirming what he hath done, when he hath power to break the agreement. And they have devised several ways to free such a prince from his obligation, when he thinks fit to null what in words he seemed to establish: but I shall not trouble you with them; nor should I have said any thing at all of this, had it not seemed to me necessary to inform you that whatsoever they may seem to give you with one hand, they have devices artificially and cunningly to take away with the other. Whereby they justify what father Deza said in a sermon of his in praise of their founder Ignatius: who was the mighty angel, he told them, that St. John saw in Rev. x. 1, *who came down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun*, &c.: and inquiring why he was represented as *clothed with a cloud*, makes this answer, that "it signifies that he hides and conceals his generous and sublime counsels and designs: and represents also the government of our society, which manifest their effects, but hide their rules and their modes or manner of acting." "As of old," saith he, "a cloud covered the tabernacle of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord entered into it; so God, who hath built this tabernacle on earth, (he means the society of the Jesuits,) hath with the same wisdom ordained, for the preserving the honour of so holy a thing, *ut ejus gubernandi ratio adeo secreta esset*, 'that the reason and manner of its government should be so secret,' that no man should be able to know it."

Which I think you see verified to the full at this day. We feel the effects of their counsels, but we see not the secret springs by which they move. They are *covered with a cloud* indeed, and cast a mist before people's eyes by a number of cunning distinctions, crafty evasions, and secret reservations; wherein they instruct their proselytes that they may be able to do the most villanous things, and yet not be seen, but lie concealed from the eyes of the world, even when they are caught, and many evidences are produced of their wickedness. *O my soul*, will every one here be apt to say (with good old Jacob), *come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, my honour, be not thou united*[x]. But it is not enough to pray against their artifices; we must take a more effectual course, by true

[x] Gen. xlix. 6.

repentance, to engage the wisdom of heaven on our side to defeat their most crafty and subtle contrivances. Else we may be cozened and gulled out of our religion, if by outward force they cannot prevail against us, and return in time to our old blind devotion: according to the observation of St. Stephen, that when the Israelites would not obey Moses, then in their hearts they turned back again into Egypt; and then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven.

But suppose none of these things should befall us, but we should keep our religion; what shall we be the better for it if we do not repent? Nay, how much the worse shall we grow by the abuse of his abundant grace, and so many remarkable deliverances from our enemies which we have received? There are other spiritual evils that he hath threatened to inflict upon the impenitent, and are the sorest wounds, the sharpest punishments that he can give with this *sword of his mouth*. They are such as these, the withdrawing of his grace, the taking away his holy Spirit, and consequently ceasing to move their hearts unto repentance; denying them the helps they have had, and putting no such stops to them in their evil courses as sometimes they have found: but removing those things which might excite and stir them up to amendment; and, on the contrary, permitting such as may confirm them in their contumacy, whereby they become hardened and sealed up unto condemnation, to be punished with everlasting destruction, when the *Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, to take vengeance on all those that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ*.

These are sad and dismal things, which should stir up every one of our drowsy hearts to mark and observe and lay hold upon every good motion of God's good Spirit in our hearts unto repentance, lest it depart away from us, and by degrees leave us insensible, utterly insensible of the things belonging to our peace. Which, one would think, should be so dear to us, (though we look no further than this present world,) that we should readily consent to any thing that will procure it, and set ourselves against that which obstructs it, and will finally undo us. And that we all confess is our heinous sins; for all the power of the devil and of men, though never so violently bent against us, cannot destroy us, unless we continue still in

the plot, as I may call it, wherein we are engaged too deeply against ourselves, by our wilful persisting in profaneness, filthiness, contempt of religion, and of that authority which supports it, and such like sins: which have brought us into that low, that weak and contemptible condition, in which our enemies could never have hoped to have seen us, unless they had first debauched us.

That hath been their great craft, as it was Balaam's; to whose devices my text hath a particular respect. He saw clearly there was no way to prevail against Israel, but by engaging them in idolatry and irreligion; and that there was no way to engage them in that, but by enticing them to fornication. So the Samaritans excellently gloss upon his story [q]: who introduce Balaam telling the princes of Midian, that the holy angels surrounded Israel, and the King of heaven and earth was with them; so that neither magic nor any thing else could prevail against them, unless they admitted some infidelity, or committed some grievous sin. Then, said he, the Creator will be angry with them, so that they shall perish, and not one of them remain. For the accomplishment of which, he advised them to send the most beautiful women in their country among them, every one of them with the idol which she worshipped in her hands; and that she should offer herself to be theirs, if they would eat of her meat, drink of her drink, and worship her God. This was *eating things offered to idols*, mentioned before my text; whereby many of them perished, and the rest were saved, who severely punished these enormities, and thereby showed their hatred and detestation of the wickedness of their brethren.

After which pattern Christ expected the church of Pergamus should be severe against all those among them who were seduced from the Christian purity in doctrine and in manners by the like artifice of the devil's agents. Whereby he knew he should put them out of Christ's favour; and if they continued in those wicked courses, quite unchurch them, and bring them again under his vassalage. This is the repentance which Christ here calls for in my text; and which he requires of all governors,

[q] Apud Hotting. Smegma Orientale, [de usu linguarum orientalium,] p. 444. [4to, Heid. 1658.]

and those in authority, civil or spiritual; that they should not be slack in punishing sin, and suppressing all false doctrine, and especially those lewd opinions which lead men to all manner of looseness and wickedness.

For, if you observe it, the church of Pergamus had been steadfast in the faith in the time of persecution; and when Antipas his faithful martyr suffered, were a commendable people in many things (as we likewise in this church, at least our forefathers, may be commended for this, that in the days of fire and fagot, many chose to die rather than to change their religion.) But there were a *few things* which Christ had against them. First, because they had those among them who *held the doctrine of Balaam*, &c.; and secondly, those who *held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans:* who were another sort of filthy people, giving themselves over unto promiscuous lusts of uncleanness. When he saith, *they had such among them*, he means, they connived at them, and did not eject them; for it was not their fault that those men held such opinions, but that they suffered them without the censure of the church. And then immediately he adds, *Repent, or else I will come against thee quickly, &c.* As much as to say, You must suffer these men no longer among you (that was their repentance at that time); or if you do, I will not endure it, but will come and punish you for this indifference in religion.

Now I leave you all to judge, whether the factors of the evil one have not taken this very course to unchurch us; and we by our negligence be not in the way to unchurch ourselves. They have infused poisonous principles into men's minds, and taught them, for instance, to decry marriage as a foolish slavery, to think fornication an innocent thing, and so to give up themselves to commit all uncleanness with greediness: that so, forgetting all respect to our religion, they may in the issue make them Romanists, and proselyte them to their idolatrous services; that is, make them ten times more the children of the devil than they were before. And what other way is there to be saved from the destruction which these and other vices will bring upon us, but (that which we are not willing to take) for every man to repent of his own wickedness and turn to God; and then for those who have authority to set themselves with all their might to punish and to root out such wickednesses, with

all the principles that lead unto them, together with the abettors and supporters of them?

And here it may be fit to observe, that a *few things*, if very destructive to religion, may provoke the divine severity against a church. For they were no more that Christ charges this church of Pergamus withal; and yet, if they did not amend, he threatens to *come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth:* what will become of us then, whom he hath so many things to charge withal, if we go on still to provoke him with them to jealousy? I doubt we cannot clear ourselves from such filthinesses as are here mentioned, nor from foul doctrines leading to them, which too many have entertained; nor from coldness and indifference in religion, if not plain infidelity; nor from a disposition of heart in some to turn back to Rome, the spiritual Egypt, again; nor from conniving at the defection which so many have made from Christ's true religion here established, and not endeavouring to suppress all those that seek to destroy it. And, which is still more, we are foully guilty of slighting that authority which should call men to an account for all their wickedness; and not only reprove and rebuke, but censure and chastise, and exercise Christ's discipline upon notorious offenders. This is a thing not only laughed at and despised, but hated and scorned; nay, the ministers of Christ themselves are but lightly esteemed. For which, if there were nothing else, we may be sure Christ will reckon with us.

Reckon with us, did I say? He hath done it in part already, and yet we are not cured of this malignant humour; which makes me fear the saddest part of the reckoning is still behind. Take the prognostication in the words of a great doctor of this church[r]: who thus denounced God's judgments against this nation, a good while before the late wars, upon this very account, that he saw the people running headlong into this great sin; which is marvellously increased since that time.

"Questionless," saith he, "this open, malapert, scoffing disobedience to all ecclesiastical power, now openly professed by the meanest, and countenanced by many great ones of the laity, is the sin which (to all that know God's judgments, or have been observant to look into the days of our visitation) cries

[r] Dr. Jackson on the Creed, book ii. chap. 9. [Works, vol. i. p. 407.]

loudest in the Almighty's ears (more loud by much than the prayers of friars, monks, and Jesuits do) for God's vengeance upon this land; for vengeance to be executed by no other than our sworn, inveterate, malicious enemies; by no other grievances than by the doubled grievances of the long-enraged Romanists' iron yoke; which is now prepared for us, ten times more heavy and irksome than that was which our forefathers have borne."

I pray God this do not prove a true prediction. If it do, we cannot say but we were forewarned, and that God's watchmen discharged themselves, and told us beforehand of the danger. Which we had better prevent, by becoming more obedient to their godly admonitions, by submitting to their just censures, by esteeming them very highly for their work's sake, and giving them all due encouragement to do their duties sincerely. And though some be negligent and idle, or ignorant, let not either the baseness or the lewdness of any of their persons tempt you to despise their office; for that is the reason (in that doctor's opinion) why God sends no better men in many places. "God knows," saith he, "for whose sake it is; but we may all fear it is especially for the infidelity and disloyalty of this people towards him, and for their disobedience to his messengers, that he sends them such idle, foolish and lewd pastors as they have in many places.

"Because the laity of this land are so prone and headstrong to cast off Christ's yoke, and to deny due obedience to his faithful ministers, he therefore sets such watchmen over them in many places, as they shall have no lust to obey in any thing that they shall propose to them, but harden their hearts in infidelity and disobedience." Which I have shown you already is one of the most fearful judgments that God can inflict upon us, and which we ought to dread more than the "enraged Romanists' iron yoke, which," he saith, "is prepared for us."

It hath been preparing many years; and it seems now to have been very near to be clapped, when we thought not of it, upon our necks. It is a miracle of God's mercy that it was not: but let not that make us too confident that it shall never be laid upon us, nor fancy it is quite broken in pieces, because we are slipped from under it at present. For if our shameful disobedience to the gospel, and contempt of its ministers still

continue, (notwithstanding that they are acknowledged to be much better now in most places than when that doctor wrote,) I fear we do but feed ourselves with vain hopes of an absolute deliverance. Or suppose he will not let them be the instruments of that punishment which our sins deserve, (because they of that church are so exceeding wicked, so void, that is, of all faith, truth and honesty, so perfidious, malicious and cruel, and all under a colour and pretence of religion, which warrants all these things, and makes them the more abominable,) yet assure yourselves he will find some other way to execute the judgments he hath threatened to the impenitent. There is some likelihood he will take them in their own craftiness: but let not the hope of that tempt you to be secure; for he will destroy us too in our impudent disobedience and hardness of heart, which will not be moved by any thing to come to repentance; no, not when we ourselves acknowledge that we expect mercy and deliverance from him upon no other terms. For so we constantly pray in the collect for deliverance from our enemies: where we first acknowledge, that to him "it justly belongs to punish sinners, and to be merciful to them that truly repent:" and then desire him to "deliver us from the hand of our enemies; to abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices." Unless we repent, we here confess that we have no reason to expect his salvation; but rather such punishments as he justly inflicts upon such sinners as will notwithstanding go on still in those trespasses, whereby they see they are in danger to perish inevitably.

Let me once more therefore beseech you, as you love your souls, as you love your religion, your lives, your liberties, and all that is dear to you, examine and search, and try yourselves by the infallible test of God's most holy word; lay your hearts to that rule while you have it, and resolve, by God's gracious assistance, to bring them to a sincere conformity with it.

Especially let all good men (whatsoever the rest are pleased to do) apply their endeavours to purify themselves more perfectly, to walk more circumspectly, to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; and to cry mightily unto God for his sparing mercy. It is possible they may be saved, though he punish others. Nay, by their importunate cries unto him, and solicitous prayers, day and night,

for this poor church and kingdom, they may obtain some respite of his judgments, and prevail for the putting them off till a further time, if they cannot quite avert them.

Ahab's humiliation, you know, procured this favour: and therefore if all, both king and people, did this day imitate him, so far as with great sorrow and affliction of spirit to acknowledge their offences, earnestly beg pardon, cry for mercy with strong and constant importunity, and reform some notorious sins, (though not all of which we are guilty,) it might prove a prolonging of our tranquillity. Nay, it is possible, as I said, that though others continue still insensible and negligent, yet if all good people would make it their business every day to grow better, and to pray to God incessantly, that he would at least forbear us, and have patience with us, expecting still longer, if we will bring forth fruit worthy of his gospel; it is likely they might obtain this mercy of enjoying truth and peace in our days.

Let me speak to you therefore in the words of a pious and learned man before the late wars.

"All ye that fear God, and tremble under the expectation of his wrath, give him no rest, stand up in the breach, make a strong assault, as I may say, upon heaven with your prayers; give not over till you have received a gracious answer; till the sins of our nation be pardoned, his imminent judgments averted, his ancient favours recovered; till he have rebuked Satan, and trodden him under our feet; till he have frustrated the bloody hopes and desires of the enemies of his truth; till he build up the breaches, raise the ruins, and bind up the wounds of his Sion: saying with Daniel, *O Lord God, we have sinned and committed iniquity, &c., yet compassion and forgiveness is with thee, O Lord: and therefore we beseech thee hear the prayers of thy servants, and their supplications; and cause thy face to shine upon this church, for thy name's sake. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord consider, and do it; defer not, for thy own sake, O our God: for thy name is called upon us, and we are thy people.*"

A SERMON

PREACHED ON THE LATE FAST,

DECEMBER 22, 1680. Afternoon.

REV. iii. beginning of the third verse.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

THE sad and calamitous condition of this once most happy church and kingdom is so great and so visible that it can be no longer dissembled; but we must confess with the prophet Isaiah, (in the first lesson for this Morning Prayer, i. 5,) that *the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,* &c. Which hath moved his majesty (by the desire of his parliament) to cause it to be proclaimed to all his people, that we may be awakened to look about us, and see how we may prevent the dreadful judgments which are now impending over us.

That which hath occasioned this deplorable state of things, is (as we are told in the proclamation which called us hither,) "the impious and horrid conspiracies of a popish party; who have not only plotted and intended the destruction of our sovereign, the subversion of the government and religion established among us; but still obstinately prosecute their intentions, notwithstanding God's most wonderful discovery of their wickedness."

And one of the ways whereby they carry on this design being (as we are there also informed) "by fomenting divisions" among ourselves; these are no less to be bewailed by us than any other thing whatsoever, both as a calamity, and as one of those sins, those most "grievous and many sins," which must be acknowledged to be the main cause of all our dangers.

And they are so great that in human reason they can by no other means be remedied than by the special hand of Heaven. Which we come therefore here to implore, in a " particular blessing upon the consultations and endeavours of the great council of the kingdom, and in defeating the wicked counsels and devices of our enemies, and uniting the hearts of all his majesty's loyal protestant subjects."

But these great blessings we cannot reasonably hope to obtain, no, not by our fasting, and humiliation, and prayers, unless we endeavour a true reconciliation with God, by being unfeignedly penitent, and resolving to forsake those sins which we ourselves confess have brought us into such distresses and perplexities as nothing else can remedy.

Now in order unto this, as I excited you on the last day of solemn fasting and prayer to a serious and speedy repentance, by such arguments as I found in those words of our Saviour to another of the seven churches of Asia, ii. 16.: *Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of my mouth:* so at this time I shall direct you a little in the way and method of repentance, and point at some things of which you are to repent; from these words which I have read out of our Saviour's letter to the church of Sardis, with whom we of this church have too manifest a resemblance.

For, as our blessed Lord complains, ver. 1, we *have a name that we live*, i. e. are good Christians: but alas! in deed and truth are dead; for we produce not the fruits of Christian virtue. There is a great deal of bustle and stir about religion, for which we seem to be mightily concerned: but the inward life and power of it is generally wanting, which we do not love to be troubled withal. Nay, we can scarce say so much of our people as God doth of Judah in the first lesson for Evening Prayer, *They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God*[a], &c., (which, alas! we have most openly deserted,) though this was far short, we find in that chapter, of making them an acceptable nation to him. At the best we must confess we are fallen asleep and grown very slothful, as our Saviour here supposes them of Sardis to have been, ver. 2: and there is so great and universal a decay of

[a] Isaiah lviii. 2.

true piety and goodness among us, that we are in apparent danger to lose the small remainders of it. Something good there is still left in this church, as there was in that: but far from that entire and complete obedience which our Lord expects from us, as will appear by considering what is to be done by us for our recovery to a better condition.

And there are three things which our Lord here requires of them in my text: and are incumbent upon every one of us, as our necessary duty, if we would be saved from our present danger.

First, *to remember what they had received and heard.*

Secondly, *to hold it fast.*

Thirdly, *to repent*, of their forgetfulness, I suppose, their looseness and indifferency in their religion.

I shall treat of them all in the order wherein they stand: and consider them, both with respect to the condition of that church, to whom they were first delivered; and then with respect to ours, who have no less need of such admonitions.

I.

The first of them supposes that they had been taught some doctrine: which they had *received* and entertained with belief; and had *heard* it also often since inculcated and pressed (so I understand the words) by those pastors who were set over them by the apostle, or those who first delivered the truth unto them. Which was nothing else but the Christian religion, of which I must not here speak at large; but only tell you it is that way of serving God which is prescribed by Christ and his apostles in the books of the New Testament. Wherein we now read what they then received by word of mouth from the apostles, and understand fully what we must believe and do to be saved.

Now as there is no cause to which God more frequently ascribes the sins, and particularly the idolatry of the children of Israel, than their forgetfulness of him, and of his law, and of what he had done for them; so this very thing (stupid forgetfulness and neglect of what Christ and his apostles delivered by signs and wonders and mighty deeds) introduced that deadness in religion of which our Saviour complains in the beginning of this chapter; and he foresaw would bring in all

the corruptions which afterwards followed in the church, and began very early to appear in the Christian world. For there arose *false apostles* and *false prophets*, nay, direct *antichrists*, (as this very apostle, St. John, tells us,) men who denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, that brought in damnable heresies, slighted the authority of the apostles, turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; nay, brought back the old idolatry, as you read in the foregoing chapter of this book, vers. 14, 20.

And though this church of Sardis is not charged with so deep a degree of apostasy as those of Pergamus and Thyatira, yet there was great danger of falling into it, unless they took this advice of our Saviour, to *remember* (better than they had done) what they had received and heard. Which is the very same with that which God himself had given of old to the Israelites, to prevent their defection from him, (in many places of the book of Deuteronomy[c],) and which his prophets were wont to give in after-times as the first step to their recovery when they had revolted from God their Saviour[d]. Who here calls upon his church in like manner to bring to remembrance, and think again and again, till they had fixed it in their mind what they had received; and with what affection also they had embraced the gospel of God's grace, (for that may be implied in the particle πῶς, 'how' you have received and heard,) as the only means to preserve them from lapsing further into a worse condition, and losing that good which was still remaining, but ready to die among them. This the apostles afterward endeavoured with great care and diligence, and promised, as we read in St. Peter[e], to endeavour that after their decease they might *have those things in remembrance always* which they had been taught: but for want of the like diligence and watchfulness in the people (who did not take such heed as they ought to have done to these admonitions,) the Christian religion in process of time was so adulterated, that a great part of the church fell into that lamentable apostasy which is foretold and described in this book of the Revelation; and which we see now fulfilled too plainly in the church of Rome and those of its communion.

[c] Deut. viii. 1, 2, 18.

[d] Isa. xlvi. 8, 9; Mic. vi. 5.

[e] 2 Pet. i. 12, 13, 15.

Which have so far degenerated from the primitive Christianity, (such is the mischief of not reflecting perpetually upon what was first delivered and received,) that their religion looks more like the old paganism revived in a new shape, than that good old way of worshipping God, which our Saviour taught when he came to destroy the works of the devil. And they were still plunging themselves further into such gross superstitions, as endangered the very being of Christianity, (by magnifying the blessed Virgin and St. Francis to such a degree, that they were regarded more than Christ himself,) that a reformation became absolutely necessary; and was generally desired, as it were easy to show, by men of the greatest note in these parts of Christendom for choice learning and piety.

Nay, in that very council which they themselves packed to hinder the reformation, (that of Trent I mean,) ten several kingdoms and states desired, both by their ambassadors and prelates, that the cup in the holy communion might be restored to the people; from whom it had been sacrilegiously taken, to the manifest violation of the Christian religion, which had instituted it in both kinds. And many pressed for divine service in a known tongue; the want of which was another palpable corruption and shameless abuse in the Roman church. Which many desired might be reformed in other particulars; but nothing could be obtained from them who were resolved to baffle all these pious endeavours. In order to which they took such a course, that there were more Italian bishops in that council, who would vote as they were directed (sometime more by twenty, sometime by an hundred) than there was of all the world beside. So that, in effect, all these parts of Christendom would have reformed, had not Italy opposed it; and craftily combined by all manner of artifices to hinder these honest intentions.

Which, blessed be God, prevailed notwithstanding in this church, and were so zealously and yet so prudently prosecuted, that we were happily purged, by the singular grace of God to us, from all those corruptions which had infected the body of religion, without the loss of any part of that truth which was anciently and at first received. For when we reformed, we did not set up a new religion, as they falsely and foolishly accuse us; but only cast out their novel errors, and reduced all

things to the ancient standard or rule of faith and worship, which *was once delivered to the saints;* that is, to the church of Christ. As will appear by applying all this to ourselves, and remembering you, as briefly as I can, what it is that we received, and have often since heard, to be the true doctrine of Christianity, as it stands reformed from the corruptions and abuses of the Roman church.

1. Which is no other than that which the church of Sardis and all the rest at first received; the fundamental principle of our religion being this, that all things necessary to be believed and done for the obtaining salvation are contained and plainly enough expressed in the holy Scriptures. A compendium of which, as to matters of faith, is drawn up in the Apostles' Creed (as it is explained by the famous council of Nice) which comprehends all things that are necessary to be believed, in order to eternal life.

2. Yet we acknowledge that it is not sufficient, as you have often heard, to believe; but though our sincere profession of faith, according to what is revealed in the holy Scriptures, and comprehended in the Creed, do enter us into the state of justification; yet the fruits of faith in a godly life are absolutely necessary to continue us in it. For that very faith which justifies us doth imply and include in it a purpose, and is accompanied with a promise of holy obedience: which if it be not performed, we cannot be accepted with God, nor claim the promise of eternal life.

This is another principle which we have received.

3. And among the rest of the duties which are required of us by our faith, the holy Scriptures teach us this as plainly as any whatsoever; that Christian people ought to have a great regard to their pastors, the guides and conductors of their souls in the way to heaven; whose spiritual authority over them is to be reverenced, though not as infallible, yet as most valuable: not to be followed blindfold, but fit to be consulted on all occasions, and most to be relied on in dubious cases.

There is no principle of the reformation more undoubted than this, that a pilot is not more necessary in a ship, or a shepherd to watch over the flock, than such spiritual shepherds and guides are to teach, direct and govern Christ's church: and that among other means and helps which Christian people

should use to understand the Scriptures, the direction of their guides is the chief. To whom it belongs, as to receive men into the church by baptism, so, after they are thus born again, to breed them up in their religion, as their spiritual parents, to expound and interpret to them the holy writings; and out of them to instruct the ignorant, convince gainsayers, correct the people's mistakes, reprove their sins, stir them up to all the duties of a holy life, satisfy the scrupulous, censure the contumacious, absolve the penitent, and administer comfort to dejected spirits.

The people indeed ought to examine whether the things they deliver out of the Scripture be so or no (as the Berœans did and are commended for it, Acts xvii.) and conscientiously to discern between truth and falsehood, between the right faith and rule of life propounded to them by their pastors, and the poisoned doctrine of heretics and deceivers: but they must not judge alone, without their direction and guidance; nor hastily conclude their teachers to be in the wrong; nor rashly dissent from them and refuse to follow their direction; but rather suspect themselves, and inquire further when they think they ought not to assent to them; and in the issue, if the things they deliver be not plainly against the holy Scriptures, to suspect their own judgments, rather than contradict those whom God, without all doubt, hath appointed to be their instructors and guides.

By which principle we have quite shut out the Roman tyranny on one hand, who would lead the people blindfold, whereas we endeavour to make them see and require them to open their eyes and show them that we do not mislead them; and avoided also on the other hand the wild frantic liberty of those who will not be led at all, but go alone and guide themselves by their own private judgment. As by the other principle also (of sticking to the Scriptures in all things necessary to salvation) we have cut off all the fond traditions of the Roman church, (which they have equalled with the Scriptures,) and yet have retained many things of ancient observation which were not absolutely necessary, but not sinful, for peace and decency sake. Because we would not seem to have undertaken the work of reformation out of any desire of novelty, but merely to discharge our duty to God in avoiding all things contrary to his word, and doing all according to it; which made our reformers, for the preser-

vation, as much as was possible, of peace and unity, (which the holy Scriptures so much commend and enjoin,) to take great care not to depart any further from any practice of the church, than it had departed from Christ the founder of it, and from the holy Scriptures whereby it ought to have governed itself.

Thus I have, in as few words as I could, told you what it is that we have received. From whence we may learn both how happy we should have been had we always stuck to it and never deviated from it; (so happy, that we should neither have had the divisions that are among us, nor any thing else which we come this day to bewail;) and also how foully the Roman church hath prevaricated and departed from the simplicity of the Christian religion. First, by adding many other articles of faith to those which were at first received; and secondly, by forbidding the people to look into the holy Scriptures which contain the foundation and rule of Christian belief.

Let me touch a little upon these two, leaving the consideration of our own condition till afterward.

First, I say, it is apparent they have highly offended God and abused his people, by making a new creed, and that contrary to a known decree of the third general council, (that at Ephesus[a],) which they pretend to reverence. For it ordained that it should not be lawful for any person to bring forth, write or compose, any other faith, than that which was defined by the holy fathers gathered together in the Holy Ghost at the city of Nice; and that whosoever should dare to compose or offer another faith, or propound it to such as were desirous to be converted to the knowledge of the truth, either from among the gentiles or the Jews, or from any heretics, they should, if they were bishops or clergymen, be deposed from their office; if laymen, be anathematized. And yet they of Rome have not feared to violate this decree by making a new faith, not in words merely, but in sense; about the adoration of images, of saints, of the eucharist, and concerning the authority of the pope, the doctrine of purgatory, and the rest of the articles of the new creed, presumptuously made by the council of Trent.

Some of which are of such dangerous practice, that learned men among themselves (Gerson, Espencæus, and others) have

[a] [Act. vi. Mansi, tom. iv. col. 1361.]

confessed it among the vulgar to be no less than idololatrical; and others doubt not to add that it is no better among the learned. And others again are so far from being articles of faith, that, for ought we can find in the Scriptures, (or true antiquity,) they are not so much as probable opinions. For instance, the authority of the pope and the monarchy, (as now they fear not to call it,) which he pretends to over the whole church, is founded merely in pride and ambition; and as it was acquired, so it hath been supported and enlarged, (and is still maintained,) by rebellion, treason, murdering of princes, wars, dispensing with perjuries and incestuous marriages, spoils and robberies of churches and kingdoms, worldly craft and policy, force and falsehood, forgery, lying, dissimulation and gross hypocrisy; as may easily be made good in every particular, to the satisfaction of all those who have not their eyes blinded by the god of this world. Who by such villanies hath mightily disgraced Christianity, which for many ages was wholly unacquainted with any such faith.

And there are also common opinions that pass among them uncontradicted, as strongly believed as any article of faith; which, notwithstanding their seeming zeal for good works, utterly overthrow any necessity of them. For it is the avowed doctrine of the greatest teachers in that church, that though a man live and die without the practice of any Christian virtue, and with the habit of many damnable sins unmortified, yet if he have sorrow for sin, and join confession with it, and receive absolution in the last moment of his life, he shall certainly be saved. And accordingly we see that if the lewdest persons among us will but be reconciled to the Roman church on their deathbed, they abuse them with the hope of salvation, telling them there is no salvation in our church, though they were never so good, but in theirs there is, though they are never so bad. Which is a clear demonstration that all their discourse about good works is a mere show, and that faith alone among them is thought sufficient to do the business, and that it is their priests, not ours, who teach men to rely upon a naked faith, and presume to be saved by it.

The cause of all which is their neglect of the rule of faith, the holy Scriptures, which are so much against them that they dare not trust the people with them.

Secondly, that is the second thing I noted as a manifest declaration of the corruption of the Roman church, that they will by no means consent the people should look into those books which contain the doctrine at first received; but upon the severest penalties forbid (without a special license obtained) their perusal of them, as if these were the most suspected or dangerous of all other books, or as if it were reason the people should believe the church, without knowing what the church ought to believe.

There is not a more evident token of their guilt than this. For that it is done on purpose to keep the people in ignorance, not to preserve them within the bounds of sobriety, (which may be done by other means,) is apparent from hence; that even those select portions of Scripture which they have chosen to be read in the church publicly, they will not let the people hear in a language which they understand. For which no reason can be alleged but that now mentioned; they are loath the people should be acquainted with any thing that may enlighten their eyes to see the errors of that church. For Latin prayers indeed, wherein they speak to God, they have this excuse, that God understands all languages; but for Latin chapters of the Bible, wherein God speaks to men, there is nothing to be said; the end of speaking to others being that we may be understood. Why then should God be as a barbarian to his people, speaking to them in an unknown tongue? And why should those things which in other cases would be held ridiculous and contrary to common sense, be esteemed good and convenient in religion? Without all doubt such things as these are the sport of the devil, who hereby hath exposed Christianity to scorn, and both kept the people from being instructed by God their Saviour, and delivered them up to be most grossly abused by evil men.

For this mischief is not single, but hath bred and brought forth another, they having set up the device of entertaining the people with images, which they call the books of the ignorant, (and are the means of keeping them in ignorance,) instead of the holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise to salvation.

For all which the holy and reverend name of the church and its infallibility is used for a colour. By which they mean only the Roman church; which being but a particular church, not the universal, is become judge in her own cause; and

maintains she does well, nay, cannot err, because she says she cannot do otherwise. There is no man who will take the liberty to consider, that can think this the way of salvation. No, it is the manifest method of perishing without remedy, for any thing that the people of that church can know. For they being taught simply to believe in the church of Rome, and to depend wholly upon its authority, without any other inquiry, can never be satisfied whether this church wherein they believe teaches the true and pure doctrine of Christ Jesus, the Lord and spouse of the church. For they are deprived of all means to find this out, being forbidden to look into the holy Scriptures, where Christ hath delivered his mind unto us. All the faith therefore of the poor people of the Roman church is no other than a human faith, being grounded wholly on the authority of men; and of all human testimony they rely upon the most uncertain, viz. that which they give of themselves. For they believe their church to be good merely because she says so; that is, make her judge in her own case, which is like to produce the most partial judgment of all other.

But it is time to leave the consideration of their faults in this thing; and, as the duty of this day requires, to reflect seriously and impartially upon our own. Which we shall the better do when I have a little opened the second general part of my text, wherein we shall see how happy we of this church might have been, if we had held fast that which we have received.

II.

For that follows, you see, in the charge given to the church of Sardis, *Remember what thou hast received and heard, and hold fast;* or keep to it, observe it and take care to do accordingly; for that is the end of calling things to mind, that we may not depart from them, if they be of consequence to our happiness.

Such was the doctrine at first delivered by Christ and his apostles, and (to apply it wholly to ourselves) such is that which we have received, being the very same, as you have heard, with that at first delivered. Which we ought therefore to keep most sacredly, and to stick to it steadfastly, never in the least warping from it, nor turning aside either to the right hand or to the left from the principles and rules of a religion

which is so well grounded, that it stands upon the undoubted word of God our Saviour.

For, as I have shown you, the religion which we have received and heard is no other than what the holy Scriptures (which all acknowledge to be the word of truth) teach us to believe and practise.

And is a religion so sincere that it teaches the people to read the holy Scriptures, because it is not afraid they should therein read its condemnation; and for that end propounds the Scriptures to them in their own language, because it is not in the least ashamed of any thing it bids them believe, nor unwilling to be laid to that rule of righteousness, and examined by it.

A religion also which in reading the holy Scriptures bids the people content themselves with that which they find there clearly and evidently delivered, (for that it assures them is sufficient for their salvation;) leaving things obscure for the exercise of the learned, and things not drawn from thence, but from uncertain traditions, or private inspiration, to superstitious and fantastical persons.

A religion which doth not make faith consist in ignorance, but in knowledge: and yet to keep this knowledge within the bounds of sobriety, directs and enjoins all private persons to take heed to the public ministry of the church, and all public ministers to study the Scriptures diligently, and "to teach nothing to be religiously held and believed, (as one of our ancient canons is[b],) but what is agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, and which the catholic fathers and the ancient bishops have collected out of that very doctrine."

It is a religion also which doth not teach us to rely upon faith alone, but presses the necessity of good works far more than the Roman church doth, whatsoever they falsely pretend; only it teaches that God rewards all the good we do out of his own free mercy, without any desert.

And therefore, instead of framing and fashioning wood and stone into the images of men, and setting them up for the people to worship, it exhorts men by all means possible to study to frame themselves after the image of God in righteous-

[b] 1571. Tit. Concionatores. [Compare the author's Discourse about Tradition, vol. vi. p. 488.]

ness and true holiness, and to conform themselves to those excellent patterns of virtue which the saints have left us for imitation.

Instead also of worshipping the sacrament, it teaches us to worship the Lord Jesus Christ in the holy and reverend use of the sacrament; not using it to make Jesus Christ, but to honour him; not to make his body descend from heaven to us, but to lift up our hearts to him in heaven; not to turn the bread and wine into the natural body and blood of Christ, but into the spiritual nourishment of our souls. For it doth not think that Christ and the devil both entered into Judas together, or that our Saviour did eat himself, or hath ordered matters so that he may be carried away by a mouse, and eaten by his greatest enemies.

It teaches none of these or any such like absurd and incredible things, nor doth it intrench upon any man's civil rights. But though it bid men reverence and obey their spiritual pastors, yet doth not place any of them above kings, nor exempt them from their jurisdiction, much less ascribe a power to them of deposing them from their thrones, giving away their kingdoms, and exposing them to be murdered, (which the proud bishop of Rome challenges,) but humbly and meekly declares, as St. Paul doth, that *every soul* (even the greatest apostle as St. Chrysostom interprets him) must be *subject to the higher powers*[c].

What shall I say more? It is a religion which acknowledges no other supreme head of the church but Jesus Christ, no other rule of faith but his word, no propitiatory sacrifice but his death, no purgatory but his blood, nor any merits but his obedience to God in all things.

A religion therefore which hath little of outward pomp and show, but much of inward substance, life, and power; which ordaineth few ceremonies, but ministers abundant instructions and consolations: which attributeth little to distinction of meats, but prescribes fasting and abstinence from all meats whatsoever, and that for an exercise of humility and other Christian virtues, without any opinion of merit or satisfaction.

[c] [Κἂν ἀπόστολος ᾖς, κἂν εὐαγγελιστὴς, κἂν προφήτης, κἂν ὁστισοῦν. —In Rom. xiii. 1. hom. xxiii. tom. x. p. 616 B.]

And it may be added, that it is a religion to which the very papists themselves are indebted several ways for their ease from many burdens. For it is our religion which hath quite spoiled the trade that was driven by indulgences; which was so shamelessly exercised before the Reformation, that sellers of pardons went, like pedlars, from house to house, and for half a crown offered to let any man have a remission of all his sins, and the delivery of a soul out of purgatory. Which was the thing that first stirred up the just indignation of Luther, to whose honest zeal they are beholden for deliverance from that imposture. They are not abused neither, as formerly, with new lying miracles and apparitions; which are seldom pretended now, (thanks be to our religion for it,) in comparison with the many illusions of this kind in former times. They are free also from being perpetually pillaged by divers grievous exactions, which their forefathers in this kingdom (I could show you) complained of as insupportable. Nor do their people run with offerings from one image to another so fast as they did before our religion let them see their follies: to say nothing of their crusadoes and other things, which it is not easy for the pope himself now to gull them withal. Which is to be put entirely upon the account of our religion, which hath opened many of their eyes to see more errors among them than they are willing to confess.

Have we not reason then to *hold fast* such a religion as this; so as neither to part with it, nor to depart from it? If truth had the same power over the will that it hath over the understanding, we could never suffer ourselves to be guilty of either. Nay, the papists themselves would condemn their own madness for endeavouring to disturb this religion, and to bring back that authority hither which made such fools of them.

But alas! it is too notorious how little hold our religion hath taken on our hearts. There being so many who have revolted, if not openly, yet in their hearts and affections, (we have too much reason to fear,) unto the Romish delusion. And others (I am afraid the most) who have retained what they received only in part; but let go a great deal of it, to the open disgrace, manifest damage, and almost undoing of our religion.

Which is the thing I must now admonish you of, in the last part of my discourse upon these words; wherein our Saviour

calls upon the church of Sardis to repent, of their not *holding fast* (that is) *what they had received*. And so must I now call upon you with all earnestness; it being the particular business of this day, and the only thing that can save us from perishing in the pit which is digged for us by our Romish adversaries, who have been long plotting (and now have almost effected) our destruction. Yet I shall not expatiate through the whole doctrine of repentance, but confine myself only to such things as relate to what hath been already spoken.

III.

You are not now to learn what it is to repent; but only what it is you should repent of; that is, be heartily sorry for, and amend.

And this also is soon known, if, in obedience to this admonition, you will but reflect upon what you have received and heard, and then consider what conformity your practice holds therewith. And here let me deal as plainly with you as becomes my office, and the solemn business of this day, and the present distress of this church and kingdom, which should awaken all men of sense to examine themselves upon these three heads.

First, what esteem is remaining among us of the holy Scriptures; in which are contained, as you have heard, all our religion.

Secondly, what fruits our faith hath brought forth; which the holy Scriptures tell us God expects from us, and are so necessary, that we cannot be saved without them.

Thirdly, more particularly, what the behaviour of the people of this church hath been, and is, towards the pastors and guides of their souls, with whom God hath principally entrusted his holy oracles.

If all the members of this church would thoroughly examine themselves upon these heads, they would find, I fear, too much matter for repentance.

I.

For the first of these, I shall omit the disrespect (to use no harder word) of one whole sect of men to the holy Scriptures, (which they have in a manner laid aside, and only accommodated the phrases of it to that which they call the light within

them,) and touch upon such things only as are common to all parties among us. In which,

1. We cannot but fear (and with grief of heart it ought to be spoken and considered) there are great numbers who have no value for the holy Scriptures at all; but have quite forsaken even Christianity itself, which is therein delivered; some the very belief of it, and others the profession. This is one of the fearful sins of this age, which cries for vengeance against us, and hath encouraged this plot to bring in popery (that is, idolatry and tyranny) among us. Which durst never have shown their heads here again, if they had not been emboldened by our irreligion. And though now we seem to be stirred up to oppose them, yet no religion will be found an unequal match for some religion, which though a very bad one, is better than none at all.

2. And secondly, it cannot be denied that abundance of those who still, blessed be God, believe the holy Scriptures, yet have lost that high esteem and affection which our pious ancestors had for them. Or if they have any, it doth not appear by their diligent reading of them, which many have laid aside. Time was, when they were read and studied with great care and fervent desire, in the beginning of the Reformation; when every body that could read had them in their hands; and some had a great deal of them by heart, as the Jews now generally have the principal things in the Old Testament. But alas! this ardour soon remitted; and now is in a manner extinct.

Musculus, I remember, complains heavily of it, in his preface to the book of Genesis, many years ago; and we are not grown better, but much worse, I fear, since his days. "And what other cause," saith he, "can we give for it but this, that the greatest part of those who seemed to have given up themselves to the truth of God, busied themselves in the Scriptures, not that they might be better by framing their lives according to that rule, but that they might be able to dispute, and to carp at the old errors and superstitions? And so some ran into all manner of wickedness; others licked up their old vomit; others leaving the manifest truth turned to new sects which sprang up; and others became neutral, and fell into perfect indifference; whereby they were disposed to receive any religion

which the great men of this world should be pleased to set up by their authority."

Which sad complaint, with much more that there follows, I wish we had no cause to renew in this church; and had not lost our first love to our Saviour, and to his holy word. Which being disgraced by the means forementioned, better people have been infected with such a negligence, that few read the holy Scriptures as they were wont heretofore to do; but live as if they believed the papists say true, that the reading of the Scriptures is the cause of all the mischiefs that are befallen us. Nay, the public reading of them in the church is not so reverently regarded as formerly it was, and as it ought to be. For there are those that never mind what is read; but look upon that as a vacant time to gaze about them, or to whisper and discourse what they please one with another. In times past, good people were wont to bring their Bibles along with them hither; but that now is worn out of use, or so little practised, that it looks as if they were as much ashamed of it, as to appear in an old fashion, which is held ridiculous.

Let such things therefore be amended, I beseech you, if you mean to save your religion from being destroyed by our Romish adversaries, whom we have highly gratified by these things, and invited to plot our ruin. Let all men among us become serious believers, and show that they are, by reverencing and reading the holy Scriptures, by frequenting the holy assemblies, and there duly attending to them; by growing truly more knowing in the ground and foundation of our religion, and taking such care to be acquainted with the Scriptures that this may not be our condemnation, that they lay open before us, and were put into our hands in a language we could understand, and yet we despised them, or would not mind them.

II.

The mischief of which is apparent, for if we proceed to examine ourselves upon the second head we shall find a most lamentable account either of our ignorance, or negligence, or wilful disobedience. For who doth not see that the fruits of faith are so much wanting that we are in danger to perish, merely because there is so little integrity, so little common honesty remaining among us, but so much falseness, lewdness,

filthiness and sottish debauchery, as have made men so beyond measure dull and stupid, that it hath given our adversaries hope they were disposed to receive any religion. Nay, they who are better inclined have been too careless in the divine service, too frozen in their devotion, and not solicitous enough in the mortifying their unruly affections and passions, in bridling their tongues, and adding to their faith all those graces about which St. Peter requires us to *give all diligence*[d]. And yet the grace of the gospel teaches us so plainly *how to walk and to please God*, that it is a wonder every body does not look upon a holy life as the most necessary part of Christianity. For nothing is there so earnestly pressed as this, which is most lacking among us: who live (as it follows there in St. Peter, ver. 9,) like *blind men*, or, (which is all one,) *that cannot see afar off*, (nothing at a distance, but merely that which is held before their eyes,) having forgotten that they were purged from their old sins; do not reflect, that is, upon what was done at their baptism, but (as if they were not able to look so far back,) wallow in their filthiness which then they solemnly renounced.

But this is too large a subject for a particular discourse, and therefore I must leave it to your own private examination and search, whether you have not relied too much (contrary to what you have received, and heard, and professed,) upon a naked faith, and the merits of our Saviour, without that care which he requires to make your faith work by love to God and to your neighbours. And here there are as many sins to be repented of as there are Christian duties to be practised, if we have been negligent in any of them. And if we will not amend, but still continue to be *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*, with what reason do we expect that he should be pleased with an idle faith which doth us no good? and not rather look for that doom which was pronounced upon the empty fig tree, *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

III.

For the preventing of which dreadful sentence I must call you to repentance for one most dangerous sin, contrary to our faith and Christian profession, which I fear too many will find them-

[d] 2 Pet. i. 5, &c.

selves guilty of if they will but be at the pains to examine the state of their souls upon the third head, viz., the demeanour of the people towards their spiritual pastors and guides in the way of salvation. Towards whom there are a great many pious persons, it must be thankfully acknowledged, who still preserve in their hearts and behaviour that due regard which religion and reason require. But it must, on the other hand, be bewailed, that there are vast numbers among all sorts of men, who do not only slight them, but have shaken off the yoke of obedience to them, which is the thing above all others that hath made the papists so audacious, and will certainly, if it be not amended, bring in popery at last among us.

Be not offended, I beseech you, if in a time when plain dealing is so necessary, and in a matter of such great consequence, (as I apprehend it,) I be so bold as to tell you, that there are those who oppose themselves so senselessly as well as arrogantly to all spiritual authority, that this doctrine of obedience to it they call Popery; which is a foul reproach to the Reformation, an apostasy from its principles, and a casting off the direction of the holy Scriptures, which require such obedience as we preach. For we do not bid men follow any guides, but such as take God for their guide; that is, guide themselves and the people by the word of God. If we did go about to hide that from the people's eyes and hinder them from reading it, it would be an evident sign that we knew ourselves to be reproved by the Scriptures, and that instead of submitting to that rule we would make our own authority to be the supreme rule, which is the crime of the Roman church. But there is no colour for any such charge to be laid against us, who exhort, who press the people to be diligent in reading the holy Scriptures; only we desire them, as the Scriptures themselves do, that they would take along with them the assistance and direction of those whom Christ hath appointed to guide their judgment.

Without which direction, men may easily see, if they please to read them, what a high crime it is to despise, and much more to revile and rail at their authority. And yet some have proceeded thus far in their opposition to them, nay, deny they have any authority at all.

The woful effects of which we see, as in other things, so in the divisions that are among us, which have opened a gap for

popery, and we all fear will bring it in. But we will not see as we ought to do, that all those divisions have sprung from this other cause, and still are maintained and widened by the general contempt of those whose guidance ought to be religiously observed; which if we will not regard as God commands us, we shall inevitably run ourselves out of our religion. For our divisions (which this day we come to lament), we all confess, will do the business if they be not cured. And of all the ways of cure which are now thought of, we seem resolved to wave the principal, if not the only way of God's own prescribing. The method of which I shall faithfully and plainly lay before you, that thereby you may judge what is like to become of us if it be neglected.

We all grant, I believe, that the right means to avoid or to remedy contentions and divisions in the church are as clearly set down in the holy Scriptures as any rule of life whatsoever. For otherwise they would be extremely defective in that thing which is most necessary for the preservation of the religion which they teach.

1. Now if you search the holy Scriptures with never so little diligence, you cannot but observe there is a duty frequently inculcated of reverence and obedience to Christ's ministers; which if the people will not pay, (according to the evident meaning of such places as I shall mention anon.) it is impossible that the society of the church should be kept in unity, but must necessarily break in pieces, and be dissolved.

2. We must add indeed that the ministers of Christ ought also to take special care to be such wise and faithful stewards in Christ's household, that the people may be inclined with the greater forwardness to obey their directions. For which end their duty is no less plainly and amply set down in the holy Scriptures; and such extraordinary caution is given by St. Paul about the admission of persons into holy orders, that were his directions sincerely followed, and did the people, as he enjoins, adhere unto them in hearty love and esteem of them for their work's sake; there would be a marvellous increase of Christian knowledge and goodness, without that strife and contention which now blasts them both.

3. But if princes do not make such good choice as they ought of spiritual governors, or if those spiritual governors by

their negligence ordain worse inferior ministers; yet the authority of ordering or reforming things doth not by devolution come to the people, nor will this justify their disobedience to them. But their Christian duty is as manifest in this case as in any other; which lies in these two things: first, they ought to fall the more earnestly to their prayers, both for their king and for all in authority under him, especially their spiritual pastors. The Scripture enjoins both, and the gross neglect of both is one cause things are no better among us. What other meaning is there of those words of the apostle [e], *I will that supplications, &c., be made for all men: for kings, and for all in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty?* And why doth the same apostle frequently desire the church would *be helping by prayers for him*, (who needed them less than we do,) but to teach all Christians how earnestly they should recommend those to God's guidance who are to guide them? Read 2 Cor. i. 11; Ephes. vi. 19, and other places.

And if they find that their prayers are ineffectual, there being no amendment in those that should take care of them; their duty (secondly) is to examine seriously, and lay to heart the cause why they cannot prevail: and a little consideration will teach them that, in all likelihood, it proceeds from their own sins, who deserve no better governors and pastors. For, (as the prophet speaks in the next chapter to the second lesson for evening prayer [f],) *The Lord's hand is not shortened, that he cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that he cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.* And for what sins do you think it is more probable that God is angry with us in this nation, and will not hear the prayers of this people, than their disesteem of Christ's ministers (even of the best of them), their contempt of their office, their proneness to disobedience, nay, their scurrility and scoffing at all spiritual authority, and such like sins expressly forbidden in God's holy word? With which this church, alas! abounds a great deal more than with supplications and prayers to God for them. All are more forward to find fault (if not to rail and revile) than to beseech God of his infinite mercy to give them pastors

[e] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. [f] Isaiah lix. 1, 2.

after his own heart; or to examine their own consciences how they have provoked God by their unprofitableness, at least, under the best means of grace that he hath bestowed upon them.

4. But let us suppose further that the governors and pastors of the church are not only negligent, but exceed the bounds of their authority, as it seems to the people, by enjoining things which they take to be unlawful: yet this will not warrant their contempt of their authority, and their casting off all obedience to them. But two things are to be considered; whether they be certain the commands of their governors are unlawful, or they only fear they are. In the first case indeed they ought not to be obeyed in such things; but by the people's care to obey in all others, which they judge to be lawful, they ought to demonstrate that it is only respect to God which makes them not comply in things which seem to them to be apparently unlawful. And so unity in most things being preserved, they will be the easier brought to see their errors on one side or other. But in the other case, when they are not certain the things commanded are unlawful, (which is the common cause of all our divisions,) but only suspect them to be so; it seems to be reason that the people should not disobey a certain command of God (which requires them to submit to their governors,) when they are not certain there is a cause for their refusal. The most that can be allowed them is humbly to desire those laws may be altered, or if the rulers of the church (who are the proper judges of such matters) cannot think it safe to make such alterations as are desired, then barely to suspend their obedience in what they fear is unlawful till they can be better satisfied; but fearing withal it may prove a sin not to obey, to use all means for satisfaction: not absolutely denying obedience, (much less reviling their injunctions, or making violent oppositions to them; which commonly ends in wresting all authority out of their pastors' hands,) but merely not doing for the present what is enjoined; modestly entreating their forbearance in such matters, or, if it cannot be obtained, peaceably and patiently submitting to their censures. Which, sure, would not be heavy upon such humble, modest, and truly conscientious Christians, (if they should, God would judge such governors for their unreasonable severity,) but there would rather be

ways found out to make up the difference without taking their pastors' power from them, and governing themselves as they please. For God, I am confident, would enlighten the one or the other, to see either their error in enjoining, or in not obeying.

5. And this that I have said is the least that can be meant in such places of Scripture as these: *We beseech you, brethren, to know* (that is, to love) *them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake: and to be at peace among yourselves* [g]. (Which they could not fail to be, as long as they kept close to their spiritual instructors and governors.) And Heb. xiii. 17, *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls,* &c. And 1 Pet. v. 5, *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elders.*

Where, first, observe the name given to the pastors of the church, viz. *elders:* which imports an office and authority in the language of all nations: and herein St. Peter implies so high an authority in the rulers of the church, that the apostle supposes more danger of its growing too imperious, than of its being slighted and disobeyed. For he requires the elders to *feed,* (that is, govern, as well as teach,) *the flock of God: not as lords of God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock* [h]. Which caution against domineering and lording it (as we speak) had been idle, if the power of the pastors, and the obedience due and paid then to it, had not been so great that it might easily grow extravagant; such was the reverence they had to their persons, and deference to their judgments, and submission to their authority.

For the word *submit,* you may observe further, is the very same whereby he expresses (in the second chapter, ver. 13) the obedience he would have them give to kings and those in authority under them. And therefore cannot signify less, than that their directions ought to be followed, and the flock ruled by their orders, in all things where God hath not ordered otherways; and that they should be afraid to offend them by disobedience, and much more by shaking off subjection to them, and denying their authority.

[g] 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

[h] 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

6. Which includes in it a power of ordaining and constituting the manner of performing the service of God according to his word: which requires that *all things be done decently and in order*[h]. The things themselves to be done (which that place speaks of) are many of them specified in that very chapter, and the rest in other parts of the holy Scripture; but the decent manner, form, and order how they shall be done is no where particularly defined there. And therefore, though by virtue of this precept nobody hath power to form new articles of faith, new objects of worship, new sacraments, &c., (wherein the church of Rome hath abused her power,) yet the substance of religion being thus prescribed in his word, the order, disposition, form and manner of doing the duties of religion is left hereby to be determined by the wisdom of the governors of the church, according to the general rules of the holy Scripture. Which they cannot indeed enact into laws binding by civil penalties; yet no Christian magistrate (to whom that power belongs) ever denied them a directive power in making rules for the government of the church, or at any time made them without them, but always took their advice in such matters. For who so well able to tell as they what is most consonant to the Scriptures, profitable for their flock, and agreeable to what hath been practised in the church of God? Which always taught, (and it is as undoubted a principle of the Reformation as any other,) that where the holy Scriptures have not given particular directions for the decent performance of the duties they call for, (as it was impossible they should for all cases, times and countries,) there the ministers of Christ, whom the holy Scriptures appoint to be the governors of his church, are to draw up orders and rules agreeable to the general rule, which the people ought to observe.

And it is very reasonable to interpret the place of the apostle before mentioned in this manner, *Let all things be done*, first, εὐσχημόνως, *decently* or honestly; after a comely beseeming fashion; with such rites as will procure veneration to holy things, at least secure the service of God from contempt, and promote devotion in the people: and the way to have things done with such gravity as this word imports, is next to do them κατὰ τάξιν, *according to order*, or by the deliberate

[h] 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

appointment of those who have authority to ordain such rites as will become holy actions. An example of which we have in that very chapter, ver. 32, where even such as had extraordinary spiritual gifts are required to submit to this order. For *the spirits of the prophets,* he saith, *are subject to the prophets:* that is, there was such a subordination in that order of men, that when one was prophesying, he was to cease if a superior prophet commanded him silence.

Which, among other places of Scripture, might silence those who question the authority of the present governors of our church, because of their superiority over other ministers. Or it might be sufficient to make them modest in this thing, to say only this, that Christ sure did not leave his church without a government, (which had been to leave no church,) and that it is incredible the whole church, pastors and people, should agree to change his government (without any contradiction that we can find) into this which we have, if this be not it which he left. And that I think hath been as little (nay less) questioned as any point of Christianity; which must needs weigh much with all considerate minds.

7. Who likewise cannot but grant that things being thus ordered and appointed by the authority of Christ's ministers, those constitutions, in all reason, ought to be obeyed by those who are subject to them, and not left at liberty whether the people will observe them or no.

This is most judiciously handled by Mr. Calvin in the tenth chapter of the fourth book of his Institutions, which is well worth the reading by every body; particularly from the twenty-seventh section to the end. Where he bids those who gainsay this, and make opposition to it, consider "how they will approve their moroseness to God. For us it is sufficient that we have no such custom of contending, neither the churches of God."

8. If we be really desirous then to make peace and restore unity in the church, (which is now so necessary that we are undone without it,) this is the first thing wherein we ought all to unite, in repenting of the breach which hath been made among us, by slighting our guides, by casting off the government of the rulers of the church, and despising, nay reviling, their orders.

I know how difficult it is to persuade men to this, because

they throw the guilt off from themselves, and so confidently lay it all upon their governors, that it is now generally taken for granted, without any doubt, they are in fault; not the people who ought to submit to them. But a very little humility and modesty (not to say common sense) might teach us to make the favourable presumption on the side of authority, and dispose the people to think it is more likely that they are mistaken than their guides; who ought indeed to have nothing so much in their thoughts, as how to do service to Christ, honour to his religion, good to souls by promoting sincere piety; and, if they have been negligent in this, deeply to humble themselves before God, and study to be ensamples to the flock of serious repentance: but if they fail in this, I am sure the people can never give a good account of their throwing off the yoke of obedience to them, spurning at their authority, and separating from communion with them. The mischievous effects of which, if nothing else, one would think should be sufficient to move them to repentance.

That is, first, to be heartily sorry for the breach they have made, and reflect upon it as the original of all our miseries. And then beseech God most earnestly to forgive it; especially that open jesting, nay scoffing, (which hath been so rife among us,) at all spiritual authority. Which, in the next place, let every one of us seriously acknowledge and resolve to reverence, so as to be advised by them; and take great heed to their counsels and resolutions, to weigh them considerately, and not lightly and hastily to depart from them, much less rise up in opposition to them; but when you are forced by God's command (as you think) to decline obedience in any particular injunction, to be the more careful in observing the rest, against which you have no exception, and still to reverence their persons and their authority, when you cannot observe their commands, to speak well of them, and peaceably to dissent from them; remembering that if they be liable to mistake, you are much more: and therefore ought not to *be wise in your own conceit, but to think soberly of yourselves, as you ought to think.*

9. This is the way of peace which we have received from Christ and his apostles, (and I might add all succeeding pastors in the church,) of which I thought good to remember you, and

to call you to repentance for departing from it, and to exhort all people to return into it; as the only means of our preservation, and of making the preaching of the gospel (if God pleases to continue it) effectual for our reformation and amendment, in all other things that are amiss among us. For as no kingdom can stand without religion, so no religion can stand long (no, not this excellent religion which we have received, and I have briefly described) without a due esteem of and regard to its ministers. In obedience to whom, even they who cannot comply with all public orders, will find more true comfort and more favour also with God and men, than in any other way whatsoever.

But here is the mischief, that it is the common error of mankind to seek that far off which (as the Lord told his people) is *near at hand*, within them, even in their heart and in their mouth, if they would be but doers of his word and not hearers only. They hunt up and down for remedies of their distractions, but will not mind the obvious cure which is laid before them by God himself in his holy Scriptures. Where it shines clearly enough, if men's passions did not eclipse it from them: which are now so great and violent, that it is a singular happiness if any person in this turbulent age can see the divine truth himself, in points of greatest moment. But to cause others to see it, is a matter of such difficulty that there is small hope of it: whilst they suffer their foul affections and passions (like a steam from a great many dunghills) to overcast the face of heaven, whence light should come into their souls; and evaporate that inward filth which is lodged in their hearts in abusive language, as it were on purpose to choke the good Spirit of God which breathes in others' mouths, whose breasts God hath inspired with his grace.

10. But this must not discourage God's ministers, nor hinder them from asserting their authority; which is to rule the people, and not to be ruled by them. To which course if we will not submit, (when God himself so plainly directs to it,) all the ways which human policy can invent will prove ineffectual, and never make a lasting union and peace among us; if they make any at all. But after men's ill affections (which they will not root out) have been laid asleep and suppressed for a time, they will awake and break out again with the greater

violence, and make worse disorders: till, with the contempt of the ministers of religion, our religion itself be brought into such contempt, that, as a punishment for our disobedience to just authority, we fall under the tyranny of those who will use no moderation.

That is the heavy judgment (I told you in my last fast sermon) threatened before the late wars, by a great and holy divine of this church, (some of whose words I have used now and then in this discourse,) for this sin of disobedience unto and contempt of all ecclesiastical authority. And whether this sin be not increased and grown more audacious since that time (and consequently our danger greater), I leave you to consider and judge. Only let me tell you, that they who stand divided from us complain of it as well as we, finding to their shame and grief, (as an eminent man among them expresses it[i],) that "we are endangered by divisions, principally because the self-conceited part of the religious people will not be ruled by their pastors, but must have their way, and will needs be rulers of the church and them." The effect of which he tells them is this: "You have made more papists than ever you or we are like to recover. It is you that tempt them to use fire and fagot, that will not be ruled nor kept in concord by the wisest and holiest and most self-denying ministers upon earth."

Which is an ingenuous confession of the guilt and the danger we have all run ourselves into by this sin; and that though all the blame is now laid at the door of the rulers of this church, yet it is so unjust a charge, that were they in all points such as those that accuse them, there would be no end of our troubles and confusions; unless the people, even they that think themselves most religious, will grow less conceited, and submit to be ruled by their proper governors. It hath been said indeed, that they do follow such guides as they think fit to lead them; but here is one that contradicts it, and complains of their unruliness. And besides, I must add, that such guides ought not to be followed as will not submit to be governed by their superiors: there being nothing, as I said before, so little

[i] Mr. Baxter, Sacril. desert. p. 103, &c. ["Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked, and tolerated preaching of the Gospel vindicated, with counsel to the nonconformists," &c.—(against F. Fulwood's "Toleration not to be abused,") 8vo. Lond. 1672.]

disputed in the Christian religion as the authority which the bishops exercise over the presbyters in the church. And if they will not so much as give us leave to tell them of this without incurring their censure, nor patiently bear with those reproofs which we think necessary, it is impossible they should repent of this sin; and then our destruction is unavoidable.

This part of my discourse indeed may seem unnecessary in an audience where I hope all of you are better affected; but it hath its use even among such as hold fast what they have received and heard concerning this duty: who should endeavour by their brotherly reproofs and prudent admonitions, to stop the progress of this disease in those whom they find infected with it. Desire them to consider things calmly, and to study this part of their Christian duty. Pray them not to be so passionately bent against the means of their safety; and that they would at least hear what Christ's ministers can say for themselves and the authority he hath left them. Tell them, it is impossible any wound should be healed while the inflammation continues: and that as when a house is on fire they that speak and give the best advice cannot be heard, by reason of the noise and cries of those who are gathered about it; so we shall never understand one another as long as we are clamorous, nay, have our minds violently inflamed with rancour and hatred, even against those that would cure us of it. The study of God's truth requires a quiet and peaceable spirit, which deliberates and weighs things without carping at persons; and doth not presently conclude we plead our own private interest, when we plead the cause of Christ's ministers. Who do not merely bear testimony to themselves, as they of the church of Rome do, but appeal to the holy Scriptures, where these things are as plainly delivered as any part of Christian religion.

God of his infinite mercy touch every heart in this nation with a sense of them, that we may not shut our eyes against the things that belong to our peace, nor while we endeavour an union make the most dangerous rent that ever was: but all so truly repent of this sin, that it may be a happy step to the reforming all other that have sprung from this. Then we need not fear any evil that the devil or man can plot against us; but while we walk in that godly order which Christ hath

appointed, (the people being ruled by their guides, and their guides ruled by God,) may triumphantly say, (as it is in one of the Psalms appointed for this day, xlvi.) *We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea,* (though tumults and hurliburlies should arise, we will not be afraid, for) *God is in the midst of this church, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.* Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR

AND THE

ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF LONDON,

AT GUILDHALL CHAPEL, OCTOBER 31, 1680.

BEING THE XXI. SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

WARD, MAYOR.

Cur. prima tent. die Jovis quarto die Novemb. annoque regis Caroli Secundi Angl., &c. xxxii.

This Court doth desire Master Dean of Peterburgh to print his Sermon preached at the Guildhall Chappel on Sunday morning last.

WAGSTAFFE.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR PATIENCE WARD,

LORD MAYOR OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

Right Honourable,

It is so hard on some occasions to be a thoroughly good Christian, and much more to be such a magistrate, that some have given over the endeavour of it out of a persuasion that it is impossible. Which, as it proceeds from great ignorance of the Christian religion, so would be a great disparagement to it, if our blessed Saviour and his apostles had not taken special care not only to breed in us a quite contrary opinion, but also to raise our minds to the highest degree of confidence, that we shall be able by the divine assistance to surmount the greatest difficulties.

This I have endeavoured, in as plain a manner as I could devise, to press in this sermon; which, by the desire of that honourable court where your lordship resides, I now humbly present to your and the public view. Which will do the more good, I hope, not only because your lordship judged it very seasonable at your entrance upon your office, but because I was directed to this subject, not so much by my own prudence as by a kind of divine providence, which I have oft observed on the like occasions.

For having in the common course of my sermons this year, at my own parish, preached upon some part of the epistle for the day, I found there was no need to go out of my way to meet with a fitting argument upon that Sunday when I was appointed to preach to your lordship. And therefore I sought no further, but applied myself to prosecute the first words which occurred there, and that not with such matter as human invention might have furnished me withal, but such as the apostle himself suggested in the rest of the epistle for that day.

And indeed they are matters of great and weighty importance, which, though there be many of them, I have both comprehended in

a little room, and also made them not hard to be remembered; because I have considered them as relating all to one and the same end, and as having not only the same scope, but such a dependence also one upon another that they cannot well be separated. I am sure where they are all united there the divine blessing will be, for they are the complete armour of God, that heavenly defence which will certainly secure us in our station, if we will but make use of it with a mind to be and to do whatsoever Christ would have us.

The first step toward which is rightly to understand our duty, as should have been pressed more largely, if I had had room enough, from those words, *Be girt about with truth.* In which if we be defective, we shall miscarry, do what we can; and the more zealous we are, the more we shall be out of the way. But it is not likely we shall be defective in any material part of Christian knowledge, if to our serious study of a right understanding and judgment in all things we add (according to the last advice in this discourse) most earnest prayer to God for his direction, guidance, and assistance; and can appeal to him in such words as those of David, (which are full of sincere affection,) that we are heartily resolved to do whatsoever we know to be our duty; and that there is nothing we long for so much in this world as to know it entirely. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight*[a].

Which that your lordship may always do, and thereby acquit yourself in your difficult charge to the general satisfaction of all good men, is the hearty prayer of,

My Lord,

Your most humble servant,

S. PATRICK.

[a] Psalm cxix. 34, 35.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD MAYOR AND ALDERMEN

OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

EPHES. vi. 10.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

I HAVE chosen, you see, for your present instruction, right honourable and well-beloved, the beginning of the epistle for this day. In the first word of which the apostle signifies that he was drawing to a conclusion of this letter to the Christian church at Ephesus. *Finally, my brethren,* I have nothing more to add but this; all that remains is to exhort you to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

He had made his most earnest prayer to God in the middle of this epistle, iii. 14, &c., *that he would grant them, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;* that so they might be able to perform all their Christian duty, which follows in the ensuing part of the epistle, till you come to my text: in which he puts them in mind that it was not sufficient to receive strength from heaven in their inner man, but they must also *be strong,* or strengthen themselves, not indeed in themselves, but *in the Lord,* in that heavenly strength which our blessed Saviour gives us, and in *the power of his might,* wherewith he will always assist our weakness.

There lies the security of Christians, from whom our Saviour expects a faithful obedience, both in their single and in their relative capacity, either as men or women, or as husbands or wives, as parents or children, as masters or servants, (all whose duties the apostle had just before most punctually set down,) because he requires no impossible thing, but such an obedience as he strengthens us with might by his Spirit to perform, if we will but be careful and diligent to strengthen ourselves *in him, and in the power of his might.*

In which words we cannot but observe these two things:

First, a Christian duty incumbent upon them, which was to *be strong*, or *to strengthen themselves;* for it is an exhortation of the apostle to the Ephesians, whom he charges with this as the very upshot of his foregoing discourse.

Secondly, the ability they had to perform this duty, which is *in* or by *the Lord;* for there he tells them their strength lies *in him, and in the power of his might,* that is, in his mighty insuperable power.

The first of which supposes that they would need a great deal of courage and resolution (for that is to *be strong* in the apostle's language,) to be able to do their duty in all relations, in all times, and in all conditions and circumstances of life.

The second supposes that their own natural courage or mere philosophical resolution, called *fortitude*, would not be sufficient to carry them through all difficulties; but upon some occasions their spirit would quail unless they were supported by a diviner sort of virtue, which he calls being *strong in the Lord.* By *the Lord* meaning our blessed Saviour, who bred in his disciples' souls a new kind of valour, which men were not acquainted withal before, or of which we read nothing in the books of mere philosophers. For as they do say little or nothing of that trust and confidence which all good men ought to repose in God, and of a vigorous application of their mind to him for strength and resolution to be truly virtuous, so they could say nothing of such devout addresses to our Lord for it.

Who sending his apostles into the world to propagate his religion, which was sure to meet with mighty opposition, furnished them with a suitable courage, which they endeavoured to infuse into all others, who by entertaining their doctrine might have need of the like virtue; which is this here in my text, of a

quite different sort from those now named: for it arises not from natural heat, or from the mere soundness of our natural principles of reason, and the honest resolution which we have firmly built thereupon; but from a far higher original, the mighty invincible power of the Lord Jesus, which was always in their eye, and on which they steadfastly relied. As there was very great need, having other kind of enemies to grapple withal than mere natural men thought of, not merely *with flesh and blood,* (as it follows after my text,) that is, with human powers and their savage malice and cruelty, but with the devil and his angels, who did all they could to dishearten them and hinder their spreading of this religion; for which end they instigated both the Jewish rulers and heathen kings and princes to persecute them with the greatest rage, and the most diabolical fury.

And the very same powers of hell we have reason to think are now at work to confound us and our religion; the reformation of which was little less wonderful in one regard, than the first publication of the gospel. For it flew like lightning, and on a sudden all these northern countries purged themselves from the Romish pollutions with a marvellous consent, as swiftly, and in as short a space of time, as the gospel, at its first preaching, ran among the Gentiles, and excited them to free themselves from pagan idolatries. And immediately the devil set his agents at work to disgrace and spoil the reformation by sects and heresies, and to deter men from embracing it by the most dreadful punishments, just as when the gospel broke out, he laboured to uphold his authority by the like arts and instruments of deceit and cruelty.

And now the powers of darkness seem to be making their very last attempt in these countries to overthrow that which was so happily, and by such an extraordinary hand of God established. And who knows but their fury may proceed to such violence, as without an extraordinary courage we shall not be able *to stand fast in the faith, to quit ourselves like men, and to be strong,* as the apostle exhorts in the 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

We had best therefore fortify ourselves beforehand with a good stock of this divine virtue, which we shall have great use of upon other occasions, (though by the merciful providence of God that trial of it should be prevented, for which we humbly

pray and hope,) to enable us to do, as well as to suffer, all things that would hinder our doing the will of God. I am not able to say to which of these my text most relates; whether to the words foregoing, or to those that follow. But which way soever we take them, there will be little or no difference; and it will be best to refer them to both; because the power of Christ is as necessary for us, to enable us to discharge those Christian duties before mentioned, as to withstand those trials which he tells the Ephesians, in the verses following, would discourage and dishearten them in their obedience.

Now to the end that we may be furnished with a sufficient strength for both, I shall do these two things;

First, shew you wherein this duty consists, of *being strong*, or strengthening ourselves *in the Lord*, and in his mighty power.

Secondly, what our work is, or what we have to do, that we may be endued with this mighty virtue.

I.

For the first of these; by *the Lord* being meant, as I said, our blessed Saviour; who, laying down his life for us, is raised again, and made the *Lord of all;* (all power in heaven and in earth being given to him, as he himself told his apostles, and afterward was proved by sensible effects;) *to be strong in him* consists in these three things:

1. First, to be possessed with a lively faith of the power and glory which our Lord now hath at God's right hand.

2. Secondly, to keep this faith alive in our hearts, that it may make us on all occasions repair to him; representing him always as actually present to us, by *the power of his might*, to aid and succour us.

3. Thirdly, in this faith to be steadfastly resolved to stick to him, and not to stir from the duty he enjoins us; notwithstanding any thing that may oppose us, to discourage, nay endanger, us in the doing of it.

Of these we have such frequent occasion to treat, at some time or other, that it may be sufficient now only to repeat them.

1. We must represent the majesty and power, wherein our Lord reigns at God's right hand, so strongly to our souls, that they be possessed with a pregnant and lively sense of it, and be

disposed thereby to depend upon him continually, as an almighty Saviour.

2. And then this faith, when it is settled in our hearts, we must actuate and excite; that it may make us look upon him as present with us, at all times, by his almighty power, to aid and assist us, to support and comfort us, as well as able at last eternally to reward us.

3. And lastly, this faith must settle in us a firm resolution and purpose to adhere to his service, and resist all temptations to the contrary; till by his power we overcome them, and remain faithful to the very death, expecting from him the crown of life.

This he expects from us, and this we must charge ourselves withal, and be faithful to it and steadfast in it. For if we doubt not of his power, why should we not depend upon it, and, by the force of it do that for which he communicates it unto us? Hath he not made us *many precious promises, that by them we may be partakers of a divine nature?* Hath he not said he will *be with us, and give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it; and never leave us nor forsake us, but be our helper and deliverer?* Hath he not bid us *not fear them that can do no more but kill the body; but fear him that can throw both soul and body into hell?* and repeated it again, that we should *fear* this great Lord; fear to offend him; fear to lose his favour, and the *glorious hope he hath set before us?* Hath he not bid us *lay hold on this hope;* and *hold fast our confidence and the rejoicing of our hope unto the end?* Hath he not bid us trust to this, that *stronger is he that is in us than he that is in the world;* than the devil, and all his partakers and instruments? who have no power to hurt us, unless he consent to it; and in that case, the thing we account a hurt shall *work together for our good.*

We are not Christians, if we believe not this. And what is there more to be believed, but that he hath power to make good his word? And how can we question that, when we remember that he is the Lord? whose power is no less large than his desire: so that he cannot be inclined by his good will to design or to promise any kindness to his servants, which he hath not equal ability actually to perform.

He doth not merely wish us well; nor can he be suspected

ever to find any impotency in himself, whereby he should be disabled from expressing the love which we think he bears us. And therefore he cannot be more forward, either to conceive good intentions towards us, or to make us promises of the good he intends, than he is ready and able to do, to the full, what he purposes and what he promises.

The consideration of which power of his is the great support of our faith, when we read any of his *exceeding great and precious promises* in the holy Scriptures; and should make us heartily depend upon them, and with a settled resolution go about our duty, in an unshaken confidence of their performance.

To this power of God it was that Abraham, the father of the faithful, had respect, when God promised to give him an heir, though an impossible thing in nature. *He staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform*[a]. The object of his faith was the *promise of God;* who, as he had never deceived him, so he knew could not be worse than his word. But that which preserved him from *staggering* at such a promise as this was his laying hold on the power of God, which made him *strong in faith.* And the *glory he gave to God,* was his conceiving so highly and magnificently of his power, as nothing to doubt of what he had said, nor in the least to imagine the thing he promised was beyond it, but to rest *fully persuaded,* that he was no less able to perform than he was willing to promise it.

The like strong faith we ought to have in the power of our Lord Christ; from whose majesty we shall extremely derogate, if we think there is any thing too hard for him to do. But to think he cannot do what he hath promised to do for us, is to blemish him with such a weakness, that there cannot be a greater disparagement to him. For though it be no discredit to one of us, not to be able to do everything that another man can do; yet to put our friends in hope and expectation, by promises of what we know is without the reach of our abilities, is such a dishonour, that it reflects scorn and contempt in the face of those who are guilty of it. And therefore if it could be conceived (which we ought not in the least to admit) that our

[a] Rom. iv. 20, 21.

blessed Lord hath any weakness or defect of power in him, yet so great a defect as this, to promise things which he cannot make good to those that believe them and depend upon them, must need be far removed from him. And we being sure that the same goodness and love which moved him to make those promises of grace and strength to us, will move him to employ his power to communicate them, we ought to trust to this, and with an assured faith depend upon his powerful goodness; and in that faith steadfastly and courageously perform most constant obedience to him, who, we are sure, cannot fail us.

II.

But that we may not deceive ourselves with a false dependance on him, nor vainly trust to his almighty power for our aid, let us always remember (which will bring me to the second thing I propounded) that it is such a faith in him, and dependance on him, as makes us use all the means which he hath appointed, in conjunction with our trust in his might, for our preservation. Else it is not a right faith in the *power of his might*, nor will derive the communications of it into our souls: for he that bids us confide in that, requires us also to do many other things; in the exercise of which, he tells us, we may be confident his power will give us the better. And if we believe as we ought, we shall take his word as much for the one as for the other.

According to which doctrine, the apostle (who could best explain his own mind) immediately adds this injunction, in the words after my text, *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* It was not enough, it seems, barely to confide in the invincible strength of the Lord Jesus; but they must put their own hand to the work, and prepare themselves for the encounter, and valiantly, when occasion was, enter into it and sustain it. For opposition we must expect, as the apostle shows, verse 12, and great opposition, from very powerful, very subtle, very industrious, and likewise invisible enemies. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* Who, among other ways they have to trouble us, stir up the spirits of evil men to give us all the dis-

turbance, and do us all the mischief that is in their power; and stir them up to so high a degree of rage, that they persecute us many times with such inhuman malice and cruelty, as *flesh and blood* could not invent, were it not acted by a diabolical fury.

This mighty and frightful opposition we are apt to make an argument why we cannot hold out, but should despair of being able to do our duty. But the apostle, quite contrary, makes it an argument why we should be strong, and resolved, and watchful, and ready armed against all temptations, and able to stand, because we have to do with such potent and crafty enemies, who are so much above us *in high places;* from whence they can more easily assault us.

This he repeats again verse 13, *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God;* that is, because you have so many, so great and dangerous enemies to conflict withal, *take unto you* (to put it on, that is) that divine armour which God himself furnishes you withal, and let no part of it be wanting, but be entirely at all times covered with it; that so *you may be able to withstand*, or to resist with constancy and patience, *in the evil day*, or the time when you must endure many calamities for Christ's sake; *and having done all to stand;* that is, having completed your resistance, by an unyielding resolution to consent to nothing against your duty, you may remain as conquerors over all those enemies that assaulted you.

Stand therefore, verse 14: he repeats it a third time, the more to imprint their duty in their mind, and to excite and encourage them unto it. He would not have them doubt of getting the better; but be confident they should be able to withstand all manner of opposition, provided they put on entirely that complete armour which he was about to recommend to them from God himself. Without that, their confidence even in Christ, and his mighty power, would not keep them in safety; but they were to trust in him, employing those weapons which he had given them for their defence and security.

Let me therefore briefly explain them, that you may see what you have to do, if you would *be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.* In which it is impossible that any body should be able to direct you so well as the apostle himself: and therefore I shall seek for no other means of attaining

this divine strength, but those which he hath set down in the remaining part of the epistle for this day.

I. And first, you must take care *to have your loins girt about with truth*, verse 14; that is, with a true understanding of all things that concern our duty, safety and happiness. Which we can receive from no place so certainly and so amply as from the revelation our Lord hath made of the mind of God to us in his gospel, which is called *the word of truth:* teaching us both what is true and false, and what is good and evil, so fully, that we want no necessary information, direction, or encouragement in our Christian warfare. Only we must make it our business thoroughly to understand the mind of God, and to let it sit close to our hearts: for that is to have it *girt about us.*

This will make us ready against all assaults, and they will find us better prepared to receive them: we shall be the more at liberty, and have nothing interpose to entangle our mind, and hinder us from doing our duty. For that was the end of a soldier's girding up his clothes about his loins; that he might be the more nimble and expedite in action, when he was not encumbered by his garments hanging loosely about his heels. Such will the clear knowledge of things, especially of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, render our minds. Which will find themselves fit for any service, and able to perform it with ease and freedom, when they are delivered by this illumination from all vain opinions about those things which we call good and evil in this world; from all false principles, from causeless doubts and scruples, from confusion of thoughts and uncertainty of mind, which weaken and discourage the hearts of men in any encounter with their spiritual enemies. Whose great advantage lies in our ignorance and folly, mistakes and false persuasions, which this divine light shining in us will chase away; and let us see through all the thin pretences whereby we are tempted to commit any sin, or to neglect our duty; and make the vanity of them so transparent, that we shall never be cheated by them any more.

For truth is great, and will prevail; not indeed unless it be seated and rooted in our minds; but if it have taken fast hold there, it hath the Lord on its side; whose mighty power resides there where his sacred truth doth; which being

the sense of his own mind, is something of himself residing in us.

There would not, for instance, be so many deserters and revolters from their religion, so many cowardly and timorous spirits who will do nothing for it, so many cold and indifferent persons who care not what becomes of it; if we understood the truth of it better, and its principles did not hang loose in our minds; but we had a lively sense of its excellency, purity, simplicity, and divine original. Which would preserve us also from doing any thing unbecoming our religion, while we make profession of it, and pretend to admire it and love it, and to endeavour to preserve it. For who could act contrary to its principles whose heart were affected deeply with this single truth, that *he who knows his Master's will and doth it not shall be beaten with many stripes?* It will go exceeding hard with that man, and he will lie under the severest lashes of his own conscience, as well as under the heavy displeasure of his Lord and Master; who taught him the *way of God in truth*, if he would have taken care, and set his heart to walk in it. Which leads me to the next.

II. Unto this clear knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ, we must add the *breastplate of righteousness.* Which is nothing else but integrity of heart, and loyal affection to our blessed Lord and Master Christ; a sincere and unfeigned love to the business of Christianity, which we understand to be the will of God.

For a breastplate, you know, is the defence of the region of the heart; and righteousness I take here to be as much as uprightness and sincerity in what we pretend: and therefore both put together signify the unfeigned bent of our will, the cordial consent of our heart and affection, to all that we know to be the mind of Christ: aiming at nothing in the world but to keep a good conscience; and thereby to preserve the love of God, and at last to obtain favour with him in the day of the Lord.

Which, besides that it is most highly esteemed by our blessed Saviour above all knowledge and wisdom in the world, and may certainly depend upon his power for the maintenance of that which is so dear unto him, hath many singular advantages in it to make us successful in our Christian warfare.

For a constant sense of our fidelity to our Lord naturally gives us a stronger confidence that he will be faithful unto us.

This makes us also as bold and fearless as lions, when we have nothing within to dismay us; but all the reason in the world to be secure and confident that we shall still attain our end; which is, to approve ourselves to our Lord and Master whatsoever befalls us.

And on the other side, nothing more daunts all opposers, or strikes such a terror into our enemies; who are in dread of those alone who fear nothing but to lose their integrity.

If this be the sole thing we resolve to preserve, and upon no terms part withal, we shall have this advantage also by it; that we shall the more clearly discern what is the surest way to safety in dangerous times, if it may be had together with innocence. Whereas they that bend every way, and sail with every wind, where they think their worldly interest lies, are always blinded so much by that, as never to see the rocks upon which they run, and are split at last.

Now the surest mark of this integrity is an equal uniform zeal for all manner of goodness and virtue, diffusing itself, like the spirituous blood from the heart, through the whole body of our Christian duty; though never so cross to our natural inclination or worldly interest.

And (as this is the surest mark of it, so) the surest way to preserve it is to give daily proofs of it to ourselves, upon all such occasions as continually present themselves; which will wonderfully encourage and animate us to go on, when we meet at any time with more dangerous opposition. This will make us undaunted, in case any hard service be put upon us, when we are not conscious to ourselves of any hypocrisy or base design, or unworthy behaviour, in lesser trials of our Christian resolution, in the daily common course of our life: or if at any time we have prevaricated, our repentance for it hath been so sincere, that in those instances especially wherein we did not keep our faith with God we since have approved ourselves better unto him, and given testimony of our renewed settled purposes by no means to displease him.

This will arm us against the most terrible impressions that can be made upon us by the enemy of mankind: against the sorest sufferings of which the apostle here particularly speaks;

even against death itself, the last and greatest enemy we have to conflict withal, in whatsoever shape it shall approach us.

To be conscious then to ourselves of no enormous crime, or to call to mind how solicitously we have made our peace with God, and what full satisfaction we have given for any injury done to our neighbour; to have nothing then to aghast us, nothing to fill us with pale fears; no guilt unrepented of to stare us in the face and threaten us; will be as good a breastplate as if we were environed with a wall of brass. 'Take a man that is just and upright, unmovable from his honest purpose, that hath settled a firm love to goodness in his soul; and neither the rage of the people, nor the countenance of stern tyrants, commanding him wicked things, will shake his solid mind; but though the world should be supposed to crack and break in pieces, and fall about his ears, the ruin of it will oppress a fearless person.'

Thus an ancient poet[a] could boast, inspired only with a natural sense which he had of the courage and strength that true integrity and sincere love to virtue gives the heart of him in whom it dwells. He hath inward peace and tranquillity (as an upright Christian feels more lively than any other man can do) which makes him less regard all outward accidents. Whereas, if a man's heart correspond not with what he knows to be the truth, what contentment can he have to suffer any thing for that which doth him no good? Who can doubt but the covetous man will rather forsake the truth than his riches, which he takes to be infinitely more precious? and an ambitious man rather quit it than his preferment; and an intemperate man abandon it than forego his pleasure? For they have corrupted his soul, and thereby made it weak and feeble; and deprived it of that breastplate, which a man that entirely loves the truth and follows it is armed withal.

In one word, if we have not sincerely practised that which we understand to be our duty, or if we have done it lamely and by halves, this will give us the most grievous wound when we reflect upon it, and so gall our consciences, that we shall find it to be the sharpest enemy we have in a day of trial.

III. But the apostle further advises them, if they would be strong in the Lord, *to have their feet shod with the prepara-*

[a] [Horat. lib. iii. carm. 3.]

tion of the gospel of peace[a]. In which advice he supposes that they who believed the truth and heartily loved it would be desirous to propagate their belief, and persuade others to entertain it. For all men are naturally inclined to endeavour to make others of their opinion; and the more necessary they apprehend any thing to be, with the greater earnestness they press to have it generally received.

But he would have them be sure not to forfeit the reputation of true wisdom, nor to lose their integrity, (which he had spoken of before,) by being turbulent in this business; but dispose themselves to go (for that is the end of putting on shoes) and endeavour to spread the gospel, or Christianity, among their neighbours after a peaceable manner.

Which are two counsels that contribute much to the securing our Christian resolution. For he that designs sincerely to promote religion in others will not easily forsake it himself. And the more good any man doth, the more he is like to receive from the hand of the Lord. But we shall do little good, unless we do it in a peaceable manner; with the spirit of meekness, and love, and quietness; without which a man can neither be thoroughly religious himself, nor make others so. For nothing more takes us all off from the business of true religion than contentions and quarrels, though they be about religion. Therefore we must follow *peace*, as well as that *purity without which no man shall see the Lord*: and be readily prepared rather to suffer any thing than to make a bustle and a stir about that which teaches us all to *study to be quiet*, and is very much dishonoured and endangered too by our unnatural and unseasonable contentions.

For soldiers, to whose warfare the apostle here alludes, are never safe but when they all agree, and are in unity one with another, as well as with their chief commander; whose great lesson is this in the Christian discipline, *Be at peace among yourselves*. By Christian love, charity, and friendly communion, we shall be much stronger against all assaults, whether from the devil, the flesh, or the world, than if we fight single against them, or, which is worse, be divided, and at last, perhaps, fight one with another. For, to omit other reasons, we shall invite more of the divine power into our hearts when we

[a] Eph. vi. 15.

live in unity, and peace, and brotherly accord, wherein he delights; but shall weaken ourselves extremely, and lie open and exposed to the common adversary, (both to the devil and all his instruments,) when, like quarrelsome soldiers, we fall out and are at feuds one with another. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work* [a]. The devil gets in at this breach above all others, and tempts men to the most dangerous sins, and most spiritual wickednesses. Which prove not only the ruin of particular souls, but of whole societies and churches: and therefore the causes of such divisions ought most carefully to be avoided, if we would stand fast like men, and be strong in the evil day.

This is a point to be now most diligently studied, because it is of great necessity to this church and at this time; when we had need be all prepared to maintain, at least, the truth which we profess, but cannot, in all likelihood, secure, unless we strengthen ourselves by being knit together most heartily and firmly in such brotherly affection, that, though there be too many dissenters, God knows, who cannot or will not conform to the public laws, yet the peace be preserved, and not the least thing done to disturb the settlement of this church. Which, whatsoever defects any man may think it hath, is so well constituted, that, as there is little hope to see a better, so if it be disturbed, we shall find, to our cost, that we have changed for one infinitely worse; though it be one of our own making and devising.

Let us consider that if the apostles and others thought themselves obliged to propagate the truth itself in a peaceable manner, even the most necessary and essential truths of the gospel of Christ, which they preached without any disturbance to the public government; much more ought we to be very careful not to unsettle a Christian church well established, nor to make a rupture in it about those things which are now controverted. Which might be better handled, and to more advantage and hope of convincing one another, if we did live in unity, and in the same communion, notwithstanding our differences, than when we separate and divide one from another; for then we begin to look upon each other as enemies, and are not so apt to be moved by those arguments which might be very effectual if we continued knit together in the same society.

[a] Jam. iii. 16.

But if this cannot be, yet whatsoever different persuasions we have about rites and ceremonies, and such like things, I am sure it is every man's interest to be thus far a peaceable dissenter, as to comply with the public order so far as he is able with a safe conscience; and where he cannot comply, to be quiet; not to make a stir by contradiction and opposition, but merely to omit what he cannot do, not reviling the public establishment, nor endeavour to bring it into contempt, and to overthrow it.

For whosoever spends his zeal that way, and takes himself for a man of spirit, doth but abuse himself and the gospel, in giving the name of courage to hardness of heart, and calling that resolution which is mere insensibility of God's holy laws about humility, meekness, patience, peaceableness, long-suffering, and such like virtues. Which great things did we lay to heart, we should be more quiet, and not make a quarrel about the small matters which now divide us; but rather bear with what is well settled, and not impious, than go about to mend it by fierce oppositions. Which commonly produce bitter strife and contention, and that is followed by worse disorders; which the apostles to avoid connived at many things among the Jewish Christians, which they by no means approved of, but desired to see reformed.

And after men have done all they can, if they be not able to endure some things peaceably which they do not like, they must seek for another kind of world than this, and for more perfect creatures than men.

There will be defects in all human constitutions, there will be variety of apprehensions even in those things which God himself hath declared; after never so many changes we shall be as far from settlement as ever, if we will not be quiet till all things be according to our mind. And therefore I take it to be much better (as a wise man resolved many years ago,) to be driven on shore by a storm, though in a crazy vessel, than in a stronger to be still upon a tempestuous sea in the power of the winds, and in danger of shipwrecks.

As for us who have consented to be governed by the laws of this church, and have submitted to its orders, there needs not many words, sure, to persuade us to lay aside all our enmities, though never so small, at such a time as this, together with all

jealousies, suspicions and evil surmises, much more all evil speakings, and whatsoever is contrary to that love which ought to be between us. We ought not, now especially, to be so much as cold towards one another because of any differences that may happen to be in our opinions, (or which we fancy to be between us,) but embrace each other with a fervent charity, as those who are linked together by the same common faith, and engaged in the same common cause, and must stand or fall together.

But in the prosecution of this weighty point I have been transported so far that I have left but little time for the remaining, which I must therefore pass over the more briefly.

IV. The next is the *shield of faith*, v. 16, which the apostle saith we must *above all things* guard ourselves withal. That is, we must continually represent to our minds by a strong and lively faith the great rewards which Christ hath promised to his valiant followers. These we must ever carry before our eyes as a soldier did his shield, that by an actual present sense of them we may beat off all assaults either from pleasure or from pain, which are made upon us to move us from our duty. For either of them may be understood by the *fiery darts of the wicked*, which the apostle here speaks of; the motions to inordinate pleasure being sometimes no less hot and violent than the grief and pain which we feel by sore persecutions, which are more peculiarly called in the holy Scriptures by the name of the *fiery trial*. As those work very fiercely upon fear, so do pleasures upon desire, and by this faith we shall be able to vanquish both. Witness the confessors and martyrs, who, having first overcome themselves, could not be moved from their steadfastness when they saw a real fire before them, into which they were threatened to be thrown if they did not recant the profession of Christianity. This *shield of faith* was their security, they being fully persuaded that Christ our Lord, who is greater than all kings, having all power in heaven and earth, would raise them from the dead to an immortal and more glorious life, if they did not, to gain or save the best thing in this world, break any of his sacred laws.

For this faith was so potent that it wrought in them a lively hope, which is the next thing.

V. *And take the helmet of salvation*, verse 17, which in Thess. v. 8 is called *the hope of salvation*. This he compares

to a helmet, (which you know is the armour of the head,) because the blessed hope of immortal glory hereafter, and of God's special favour, love and protection here, makes a man erect himself and lift up his head, as we say, with confidence and boldness in the midst of the greatest terrors and dangers, knowing they shall not hurt him, but rather bring salvation to him. With this hope therefore we must fill our hearts, which is the fruit of faith, when faith works by love, and makes us faithful unto God. Then we may have a *lively hope* in him, and this hope will make us not only strong and so full of courage, that we shall not quail or be cast down by any dreadful appearance of dangers, but enable us to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

VI. To which he adds *the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,* or the holy Scriptures. For they are the treasury of those sacred promises which are the great support of our souls, the repository or magazine (as I may call them) wherein are laid up those truths (spoken of in the beginning) which we must oppose to all the temptations which either assault our faith and hope, or would seduce us from our obedience. And therefore our business must be to study the holy Scriptures diligently till we be well skilled in them, and have learnt to wield this weapon aright, and thereby cut in sunder all objections, as our blessed Saviour did when the devil tempted him in the wilderness; and by no means suffer anybody to wrest this sword out of our hand; for if they do, they have so effectually disarmed us, that we may in time yield to any thing. They may make us believe what they please, having our faith in their keeping; and likewise do what they please, persuading us the best service we can do to God is to be the greatest enemies, disturbers and destroyers of mankind.

VII. Lastly, all these will be the more effectual, if by ardent prayer (as the apostle advises, verse 18,) we call in the assistance of heaven, *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.* For as it is not enough to be thus armed and appointed for the combat unless God be present with us, (which we ought to believe he will, as I told you at first, because he hath said he will,) so it is not sufficient to rely upon his word and steadfastly believe it, but he expects to

be solicited for his aid by our earnest prayers and supplications.

This he hath commanded, as much as for the other we have his promise. And our very prayers make us strong by giving us a more lively sense of God, (if they be not cold and careless,) and a more vigorous apprehension of his love, and of our heavenly country, to which they lift up our minds. And besides, they derive more strength from him, when we faithfully importune him that he would enable us to discharge all the duties of good Christians in every condition. And they entitle us also to his powerful protection, when we commend ourselves entirely to his providence, and trust all we have with him. Which likewise mightily raises our spirits, and gives us a higher degree of strength, confidence, and courage; when we think we have made him our friend by thus intrusting him, and relying wholly upon him to make us happy in what way he himself pleases.

And if all Christians made a conscience also *to pray one for another*, it might still be of greater force, and avail more toward our salvation. For so the apostle would have us *make supplication for all saints*, that is, Christians; that they also may be endued with the power of Christ, and get the victory over their spiritual enemies.

And these prayers would be still more prevalent, did we all *persevere*, as he says, in our supplications; and *pray always*, at all times of prayer, and that *in the Spirit;* very ardently, and with such fervent desires for spiritual aid from heaven, as we feel for those things we most need for this mortal life. And this also with so great care and solicitude, that we *watch* for opportunities of prayer; and, when great dangers press us, take some time from our sleep, or other occasion, for this heavenly converse with God our Saviour.

This is a thing wherein we are too defective, and so find ourselves faint and weak in the performance of the rest of the duties of Christian life; because we languish in our devotion, especially in our common prayer, when we meet together to pray, not only for ourselves, but for one another; for the king particularly, the royal family, the great council of the kingdom, the clergy, and all people, of whatsoever order or condition they be. Whom if we did commend to God with greater earnestness and true fervour of affection, we should find, I am

confident, as happy effects of our prayer as we ourselves desire. We should either, for instance, prevail with God to "turn from us all those evils which we most righteously have deserved," or to enable us so "to put our full trust and confidence in his mercy," as, notwithstanding any troubles, "to serve him evermore in holiness and pureness of living, to his honour and glory."

To sum up all that hath been said, the apostle in this discourse compares Christians unto soldiers; who being to conflict with their enemies, took care, as not to want weapons themselves, so not to leave any part of their bodies uncovered and exposed to the weapons of their adversaries. The middle of their body they girt about with a belt, upon their breast they wore a breastplate, upon their head a helmet, greaves (as they are called in the story of Goliath) upon their legs, a shield they carried in their left hand, and a sword in their right; and being thus appointed, they called upon their gods for help and succour. Such a complete armour must we Christians put on, if we will conflict successfully with our spiritual enemies; who are of little force to do us any harm, if they always find us armed with truth in our mind, with integrity in our heart, with purity and peaceableness in our affections, with faith in God's promises, and hope of his salvation, (working both in mind and heart and affections,) with the word of God often in our hand, and with devout prayers and supplications in our mouth, (proceeding from our very heart and most intimate desires,) whereby we constantly implore, both for ourselves and our fellow Christians, the gracious assistance of him who is the *Captain of our salvation*, and by these means got the victory, and won the crown which he now wears at God's right hand.

And be you well assured, that in this way, by being trained up in Christian knowledge, and sincere love to what you know to be your duty, by faith, by hope, by reading and meditating in the holy Scriptures, by ardent prayer to the Almighty, (especially in sincere fellowship and communion one with another,) you shall prevail likewise, and get the better of every thing that opposes your sincere resolution to do and suffer the whole will of Christ Jesus.

In him therefore encourage yourselves, and receive this word of exhortation which the apostle here gives us, *Be strong*

in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Fortify yourselves with a firm belief that he is able to send you relief, and that he will not fail to succour you from above, if you resolutely endeavour to do your duty in the way that he hath prescribed you.

The words seem to me to be the very same with those of the Lord to Joshua, (when he was to enter into Canaan and subdue that country,) which are repeated thrice within the compass of a few verses. *Be strong and of a good courage*[c]*;* and verse 7, *Only be thou strong and very courageous;* and again verse 9, *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.* From which words you may take the truest interpretation of my text, and look upon Joshua and the Israelites as a lively picture of the state of us Christians. The Lord promised to be with him whithersoever he went, and bade him nothing doubt but by his strength he should vanquish all the Canaanites. But for all this he and the Israelites were to go up armed against them, and both to fight according to such directions as he gave them, and to keep themselves from every polluted thing which he forbad them; and not depend merely on the arm of the Almighty to give them the victory. Even so must we strengthen ourselves in our blessed Lord, and the power of his might; and think we hear him say to us, Have not I commanded you? Be strong therefore, and of a good courage: be not dismayed, I the Lord am with you whithersoever you go, and whatsoever you do; and by me you shall overcome all difficulties. But we must not so trust to this power of his as to be remiss and negligent ourselves; no, he will strengthen and empower us, if we put on *the whole armour of God*, and fight against our own passions and evil desires, the world's temptations and the devil's suggestions: continually opposing to them faith and hope, and the word of God, and prayer, and an honest resolution not to yield by any means to their importunities; but to be the more excited by their solicitations to use our most earnest endeavours to vanquish them. Then, as David saith to his son Solomon, (persuading him to enter upon a great work,) so may I say to every one of you: *Be strong and of a good*

[c] Joshua i. 6.

courage, and do it: fear not, neither be dismayed: for the Lord God will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord [d].

It is for God and for his glory, that we fight resolutely against the devil, the world, and the flesh; and therefore why should we doubt of his aid, when by the victory he will be honoured as well as ourselves? We not only may, but ought to ask it, and to expect it with an humble confidence in his almighty goodness, who hath told us he will deny us nothing which we beg in the name of the Lord Jesus. And what can we beg of him more acceptable to him, as well as necessary for us, than this; that we may be able (in our place and station, and in every condition) to do him all faithful service? And when will his name, think you, be more prevalent, and obtain greater salvation for us, than when (according to his own particular order and last desire) we make mention of it, and commemorate his love in the communion of his body and blood?

There we may offer up our prayers and meditations in the most acceptable and prevailing manner. There also we may excite our faith, and quicken our hope, and inflame our charity, and knit ourselves one to another in brotherly love, and engage to him our fidelity; and by all these means receive a greater increase of strength and courage to do and to endure whatsoever he would have us.

And therefore let me admonish you of this, for a conclusion of this discourse, (in which I have delivered, or rather the apostle taught us, many important truths, but none perhaps of greater moment than this,) that when the apostle advises us here to pray *with all prayer and supplication*, this way of praying and supplicating, by making a commemoration of Christ's death and passion in the holy Eucharist, where we represent to God how he offered himself a sacrifice for us, is certainly included. This is one sort of prayer, and the chiefest among Christian people; nay, the most proper to them of all other.

From whence we may safely conclude, that they who neglect this lie more open to temptations than other men. They have not put on the whole armour of God, but want a principal part

[d] 1 Chron. xxviii. 20.

of it, and that part which is most properly Christian; and therefore must blame themselves that they are no better men, but are so frequently overcome, and fall into sin, even against their resolutions (perhaps) and notwithstanding their prayers, and their looking up to the Lord Jesus for help. There is a great thing still wanting; they do not use all the means that he hath appointed for the obtaining of his help. There is one manner of address to him which they either live in a constant neglect of, or but seldom apply themselves seriously to its solemn use. For if they did in good earnest and with all their hearts *do this* often *in remembrance of him*, as he hath required; they would find their Christian resolution mightily fortified, and their souls endued with much strength, to do all the rest of the will of Christ.

Nay, they would at last do their duty, though in itself difficult, cheerfully and triumphantly, saying with St. Paul elsewhere, *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*[e]. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

[e] Rom. viii. 35, &c.

AD TESTIMONIUM:

A SERMON

ON

THE KING'S DAY,

FEBRUARY 6, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

AT ST. KATHARINE COLEMAN'S, LONDON.

A SERMON

ON THE KING'S DAY[a].

PSALM lxxii. the latter part of ver. 15.

Prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.

THESE words have in them a double energy both of prayer and prophecy. They had likewise a double completion both in Solomon and Christ. In the prayers of all holy men there is something of prophecy: they utter nothing but the will of God, so God hears and ratifies their requests. The words likewise of dying men are esteemed more prophetic than ordinary; and these are supposed to be the last words, i. e. as ye have it in ver. 20, the last prayers of this religious king, made, it seems, at that time when Solomon by David's appointment (that is, by God's appointment, for David herein observed the will of God) was proclaimed king.

The particulars of Solomon's inauguration are at large in the 1 Kings i. We find there, that in the latter part of king David's reign, Adonijah, the son of Haggith, exalted himself, and put in for the succession; not that he believed himself that he had a title to the crown, as he afterward confessed, chap. ii. 15, but Joab and Abiathar, and some such troublesome men,

[a] [King James the Second having succeeded to the throne upon the death of his brother Charles on the sixth of February 168$\frac{5}{6}$, the service appointed for the accession was annually performed upon the anniversary of that day; until after his abdication a proclamation was published by order of the lords spiritual and temporal assembled at Westminster, "that the day of thanksgiving on the sixth day of February instant, on which the late king James the Second came to the throne, shall not be observed in this kingdom."—London Gazette, Jan. 31 to Feb. 4, 168$\frac{8}{9}$.]

had put it in his head; and that not for young Adonijah's sake, as Solomon wisely observes in ver. 22, but for their own ambitious ends. One would have thought that the declaration of king David to his privy council had been sufficient to blast all pretences of usurpation[b]. But these disturbances not only gave him new occasion of declaring God's will in Solomon's succession, but of giving express command for his inauguration before his own death; he resigned rather than bequeathed his kingdom to him, and recreated his dying hours with the public joy and acclamations of the people.

David was well pleased with the compliment that his nobles made to him, saying, *God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne*[c]. These courtiers are said to bless king David, and in such a sense he took it, for he *bowed himself upon the bed*, προσεκύνησεν, 'he worshipped' at those auspicious words, he nodded, he bowed, he worshipped, and then he fell to prayer and prophecy.

I hope king David was no flatterer or court parasite, when he filled his mouth with prayer and praise, and expressed so much pleasure and satisfaction at his son's accession to the crown. In those days it was no crime to be zealously loyal, to worship toward the east, and adore the rising sun; he was not then esteemed an enemy to David or to the present government of Israel, that strewed *aves* and welcomes in the new king's way, and forgot to think of any thing but the expectation of new blessings.

David by his own example had discountenanced all intempestive grief at the death of his first child by Solomon's mother, and that without the comforts of another to succeed in his affection: and now at his own death he will not suffer them to be unmannerly in their sorrow, but teaches the people to forget him and look up towards his son; and so they did as heartily as the king could wish, *for they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. And all the people came up after him, and played upon flutes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them*[d]. It was as if the whole earth had opened its mouth and sang for joy too, and all this so long before king David was

[b] 1 Chron. xxviii. [c] 1 Kings i. 47. [d] Ver. 39, 40.

cold in his grave, that he himself was one to make up the chorus. They blew the trumpet, and he prayed; they rejoiced, and he prophesied; he prays to God for the prosperity of his successor, and desires that all his people might pray for it too; and that not only for his successor's, but for the people's sake: and so he begins, *He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment*, ver. 2.

And indeed this Psalm is not only a prayer to God, but an admonition to the people; it is their cause which he pleads, and therefore they must come in with their endeavours. God hath performed his part in giving them a just and righteous king to succeed David; and now it is their parts to pray to God continually for him, to pray that God would continue him amongst them, that so their happiness might continue for many years. So likewise they are to offer up praises, they are to praise the king daily, that is, in effect, to praise God for the king.

This is the people's duty at all times, and this is our present duty; it is the most particular business of this day. We come here to pray for the king; we come to praise him, and to praise God for him. It is the subject of the text, and the subject of the day: prayer and praise, the only two principal parts into which my text can be divided: *Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.*

First of prayer; which is a duty incumbent upon all subjects for all princes, *pro omnibus imperatoribus*, without any distinction. My method shall be this;

First, to give you some reasons why this duty should be performed; and,

Secondly, I shall offer at some directions in the performing it.

I. The obligations which men lie under of praying for their sovereign prince are natural and political, as well as divine.

The laws of nature teach us to look upon kingly government as a paternal function. "Every prince paramount is father of his country, so we call them," saith Seneca, "not by way of flattery[e]." So we find him making long prayers for Nero[f], even when he was disgraced and exiled by him: nothing being more natural than for children to pray for the prosperity

[e] Non adulatione vana adducti, —1 De Clem. 14. [f] Ad Polyb. 31, 32.

of their parents. From our natural parents we derive our natural life; so from our political parents our political life. The king is not only *caput et animus reipublicæ, sed etiam spiritus vitalis*[g], 'the vital spirit, the very life of the kingdom;' so that to pray for the king is most correspondent to the first great law of nature, self-preservation; for hereby we pray for our own and the kingdom's safety. So the wise senate of Rome reckoned when they prayed for their emperor Augustus[h]. Nor do we read of any nation or people, though never so barbarous, but their regard to their prince hath been the same as of children to their parents; the reasons being the same. For,

First, it is from the king that we have our origination. For as amongst the Jews to beget a child was not essentially necessary to be the father of him; some being the legal children of one man, which was the best and most excellent title, although the natural children of another: so our Saviour was the legal Son of Joseph and of David, though by nature the Son of Mary, who perhaps was of another tribe[i]. In like manner, though we have a natural obligation to those parents which begot us, yet we were born legally from the influence of government; we were born children from natural parentage, but sons only from political authority. It is from the laws, i. e. from the king, the fountain of laws, that we are legitimate; without which every man is but *filius populi*, 'the son of the people.' So that every rebel seems to bastardize his own children, in resisting that authority by which they call him father; for though the institution of marriage is an ordinance of God, yet the circumstances of its solemnization are by magistratual appointment, whereby we are to remember that the king is our first parent.

II. Secondly, it is from the king we have our daily maintenance and support: it is his wisdom and power that protects us from violence and wrong. Our estates, our lives, our all is under his guardianship; of the truth of which some of you here present are living witnesses. You remember the sad time when there was *no king in Israel;* but it was worse with you

[g] 1. De Clem. 4.

[h] Quod bonum faustumque sit tibi domuique tuæ, Cæsar Auguste, (sic enim nos perpetuam felicitatem reipublicæ et læta huic precari existimamus) &c.—Suet. Aug. c. 58.

[i] Episcopius, Institut. lib. 3. sect. 4. c. 11. [Opp. tom. i. p. 174.]

than with the old Israelites: for they did *every man what seemed good in his own eyes;* whilst they that sequestered your estates, plundered your goods, and drove you into want and exile, committed such villanies as even out-dared their own consciences. It is you can best tell, whether all that you at present enjoy is not owing unto the king's safety. He is so much more than a father, that without the preservation of his royal person, it is not in your power to keep your own children from starving; and therefore great reason have we both to pray for him ourselves, and to teach our children to pray for him too.

III. Thirdly, it is the king's life and preservation that protects our own. The shadow of his wing is a buckler to all his subjects; a buckler against all foreign violence, and domestic bloodthirstiness. So was the regal authority unto the Israelites of old, as we have frequent instances in the book of Judges; for those judges were all kings in Jeshurun, as well as Moses, although not anointed no more than he. (Deut. xxxiii. 5.) So when there was no judge amongst them, it is said, *there was no king in Israel;* as that dismal story of the Levite's wife is prefaced, which one is a sufficient instance of domestic villany and barbarity. (Judg. xix. 1.) So every now and then we read of invasions, and such public calamities as must needs happen to a nation without a head: there must needs be much wrong, either done or suffered, where there are no eyes to see, or ears to hear; but hands to pull down, ruin, or feet swift to shed blood.

And now, sure here is worth and subject enough for a prayer, that God would protect that person by whom our lives and fortunes are protected. It is a duty, and a very modest one too, to pray for kings; whereas some very wise heathens made a mistake, and prayed to them: but nature, reason and tradition, are not persuasives strong enough to men of corrupt practices to bring them over to their duty. Let us see then how far it is encouraged, or rather commanded, in holy writ, for the people to pray for their kings; though some men cannot find any such thing as monarchy itself in the Scriptures, without an opprobrium by way of appendix to it; for all that is there said in the behalf of monarchy is not a sufficient balance to the eighth chap. of the first book of Samuel; for from thence

they infer, that God Almighty was angry with the Israelites for desiring a monarchical government; whereas the whole current of Scripture proves this and no other to be *jure divino*, even in the *interrregna*, which were governed by one only prophet, or seer. So that from Adam to Saul, and forwards, the whole government was purely monarchical; the seventy elders being no other than justices or counsellors: and therefore God was so far from being angry at their desiring of a king, i. e. for desiring of one, that, as the Jewish rabbin[k] tells us, they were commanded by God that they should do so. *Statuendo statues super te regem*, Deut. xvii. 15. Their crime was in the manner, the time, and the ends of their asking one: they asked importunately; rather demanded than asked; and that for the idolatrous end of being like other nations; therefore God said to Samuel, *Not thee, but it is me that they reject.* They were better pleased with their viceroy Samuel than with their emperor God, ver. 11; and it was but a pretence for them to find fault with the government, when it was the religion that they would alter; and there is no question, that if they had not had such base purposes in their heads, God would have given them a king long before, without asking. That blessing was so long delayed, because God saw they were not capacitated for receiving it. And when a nation is not capable of government, we have had the sad experience God gives them up to anarchy. A people must be ripe for blessings before they can expect them; and then they must put them to a good use, if they desire their continuance. And amongst all the blessings that God hath promised his church in this world, I take one of the greatest to be, *that kings should be its nursing fathers, and queens its nursing mothers.* I am persuaded that hitherto it hath been the greatest blessing: and so those Christians would have told you that lived under the reigns of Constantine, Theodosius, Arcadius, and those good emperors; each of which did more good to Christ's church, in some respects, than all their predecessors had done in mischief: they nursed it, and clothed it with beauty and glory, which before had lain in rags and nakedness, exposed to contempt and danger, like Moses among the rushes. But St. Paul did not look so far as Con-

[k] Menasseh ben Israel, Conciliator, Q. in Deut. vi. [p. 225.]

stantine the Great, when he exhorts the Christians, in the 2 ch. of the 1 Ep. to Tim., *that prayers and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for kings.* He doth not say, I exhort you that about three hundred years hence ye shall begin to pray for kings: no, *ὑπὲρ βασιλέων*[l], i. e. if we make a critical search into the word, 'for the emperors;' for what else can it signify? Who were supreme then but emperors? And St. Peter expressly names the supreme; and again it was, *Fear God, honour the emperor*[l]; for it is the singular number, *βασιλέα*[m]; so this cannot be understood of governors as Christians, much less of the reformed religion, when at that time there was no such denomination; but St. Paul and St. Peter meant, that they should presently pray for the emperor in being, and the emperors in succession, as such; for Nero as well as Constantine, for Diocletian as well as Charlemagne, for Mahomet the IVth (had he been emperor of the world) as well as for James the IInd in Great Britain and Ireland. Now since the Roman empire is broken, this exhortation belongs to us; because every king in his kingdom is emperor; and James the IInd (whom God preserve) wears the imperial crown of this realm. Nothing can bar prayer no more than allegiance; it is part of our allegiance, and a most indispensable tribute. He that defrauds the king of his prayers had better defraud him of his coin; saving that such a man's prayers would not do him so much good. This is God's due, and this is Cæsar's due, our prayers to God, and for the king; so that with one mite we may pay both tributes. What remains then, but that we should bethink ourselves how to pay it; which leads me to the second undertaking, i. e. to give you some directions how prayers are to be made for him. These are two qualifications necessary to all prayers, heartiness and sincerity; the third is constancy, expressed here in my text by the word *continually;* so we are to pray for our king heartily, sincerely, and continually.

First, heartily. We are not to come to church on such days as this for fashion sake, to avoid singularity, or a bad reputation: every good man must bring a zealous heart along with him; a heart full of affectionate duty and loyalty, with love and hope in his breast, and joy in his eyes. He must petition

[l] Ὑπερέχουτι, 1 Pet. ii. 13. [m] Ver. 17.

God for the king as he would petition the king for himself; with all the elegancies of entreaty, as if he would petition for a kingdom: and then, sure, he would mix a few vows with his prayers, something or other to distinguish them from common petitions. At leastways, we should pray with such an emphasis, as if we thought ourselves quite undone if God did not hear our prayers: and so we may well think; for if God will not hear our prayers for the king, it is a sign he will not hear them at all. Let us have a care that those prayers be not lukewarm; for when God spits them out, he commonly spits them into the cup of indignation, that is the cup of anarchy, when the prince and the priest go off together; and then comes the kingdom of antichrist. For the pious and learned Dr. Hammond[m] proves every stubborn subject to be a limb of antichrist, who exalts himself above all that is called God. But, secondly, we are to pray for the king sincerely, i. e. without any mental reserves or mixed equivocations; we must pray for the king in that sense that the church prays for him, in that sense that the primitive church of Christ is wont to pray for their emperors. Tertullian[n] gives us a taste of those prayers, by which we may guess at the rest. First their manner. "We pray," saith he, "for our kings with our hands stretched forth, because they are innocent, they were never lifted up against them. 2. With bare heads, because we are not ashamed; our consciences do not fly in our faces, and reproach us with hypocrisy. 3. Without any human order or prescription, because we pray willingly and from the bottom of our hearts; a long life, a secure throne, a safe abode, a potent army, a faithful senate, a conscientious people, and a peaceable empire." This was a sincere and honest prayer, such a sort of prayer as we come here to make, without parsimony and without fraud. Let me then give you three short and general directions in praying for the king.

First, to pray for him as you would have others pray for you.

Secondly, to pray for him as if you prayed for yourselves, and

Thirdly, let the subject matter of your prayers be as sincere and liberal as when he prays for you. We may know how that hath been by the effects. Be sure they are such prayers as

[m] Treatise of Resisting the lawful Magistrate. [Works, vol. i. p. 53 sqq.]
[n] Apologet. [c. 30. p. 27.] ad Scap. c. 2. n. 11. [p. 69.]

David and Solomon put up: the effects have been the same; peace is within our walls, and prosperity within our palaces. Besides, methinks we are all grown better of late, a new genius ascends the horizon; no doubt, but from some new cause, from our new king's prayers. *For thou, O God, hast heard his vows: thou hast given him the heritage of those that fear thy name*[o]. Then let us all join in the chorus, *Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations. He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. So will we sing praise unto thy name for ever, and daily perform our vows.*

Thirdly, we are to pray for him continually. *Prayer also shall be made for him continually;* so that we come here to-day but to learn what we are to do all the year after. This is but a solemn remonstrance of what we resolve to do all the days of our life, and reason good if we continue to expect the blessed effects of such prayers. Not that some men's omission of prayer (no, nor their curses) can do the king and his loyal subjects any harm, for God can rain down blessings upon the fleece, and let the barren ground remain dry; and so God can rain down curses upon the ground, and yet Gideon's fleece shall escape, every lock and hair of it. If some will not continually pray for the king, yet God will continually bless him for their sakes that do; at least if the king prays for the people, God will return his prayers upon his own head. Thus much for prayer.

The second part is praise. This is a more particular duty, incumbent only for particular reasons. Prayers for their kings is the duty of all nations, but praise only belongs to Solomon and such kings as Solomon was; and yet there is this duty incumbent upon all mankind, which is to praise the government when they cannot praise the person. The character of a king, in the person of one prince, is as laudable, divine, and sacred, as in the person of another. They are all of them, as Calvin tells us, the sons of God[p]; they are so *ex officio*, and praise is as just a debt to their office as honour to their persons: indeed there can be no honour without praise; praise is the result of liking and approbation, without which honour is no better than mockery. But in this place the holy Psalmist doth not speak

[o] Psalm lxi. [p] In Luc. i. 21. [Harm. Evang. p. 10.]

of that praise and honour which is universally due to all princes, but of that extraordinary praise which his successor king Solomon and all such princes as he may justly claim. So here we are to consider the character of a prince who is praiseworthy.

And here I have a fair opportunity of entering into a panegyric upon that glorious prince whose praises we come hither to celebrate, as well as to offer up our prayers for him: but I would willingly avoid all invidiousness, as well of the malevolent for my ambition, as of the censorious for my presumption; and yet I fear neither. But because it is so coincident with my text, and most appropriate to the undoubted sense of it, I shall give you a short character of that prince for whom it was first made, that not only our's but all princes of those excellencies may come in for their dues.

First, he was a prince of the most celebrated wisdom and understanding in the world. This was his natural talent; which because he had so well improved, God Almighty at his request added to it: he was mature for government, and well qualified for empire, so that God sent him to the people with a blessing in his hand. It is the king's wisdom that is the people's safety, and therefore when God in Isaiah[q] threatens them to give them children to be their princes, and babes to rule over them, the consequences of such a government follow in the next verse: *And the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour*[r].

Secondly, he was a most industrious prince. He made his duty his business, and very conscientiously considered the great charge committed to him; he was always employed for the people's good, vigilant and active upon all occasions. We read indeed, that in all his reign the people had little else to do but to sit down every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba[s], eating and drinking and making merry. It was well for them, but you will find the good king otherwise employed; his greatest pleasure was to see his people safe, and to be the author of all those pleasures and comforts that they enjoyed, and which they could not enjoy but by his pains and care.

Thirdly, he was a king very eminent for justice, which was

[q] Isaiah iii. 4. [r] Ver. 5. [s] 1 Kings iv. 25.

one great effect of his wisdom. It is Solomon's own maxim, that *a prince that wants understanding is a great oppressor;* but a prince of understanding and wisdom will never do nor suffer wrong. The lawyers tell us, that the king cannot wrong his subjects; and our divinity books tell us, that he ought not to wrong himself[t]. The king is as responsible to God for his own honour as for the people's safety, and that the rather, because it is God's honour as well as his; but yet he had much of David's clemency and mercy. I am sure Paterculus would have thought so if he had lived in his reign; for he looked upon it as a thing even incredible, *quod humanam excedat fidem,* 'that Cæsar, who was but an usurper, should spare those that were of Pompey's faction;' and yet we read of some great persons executed upon that account, even L. Cæsar, his kinsman, contrary to due form of law[x].

Fourthly, he was a prince of great constancy and resolution. He met with many difficulties in coming to the crown, and even at his first accession he was forced to encounter with an unnatural and dangerous rebellion: it was a difficult juncto, and required a steady hand of government. *Tranquillo quilibet gubernator est*[y], 'every one can sail in a calm sea, but storms and tempests make a proof of the pilot.' It might be said of him as it was of Cæsar, "His mind was greater in adversity than in prosperity[z]." David was not afraid to leave him amongst so many of his enemies. *Thou art a wise man,* saith he, *and knowest what thou oughtest to do*[a]. *Be strong only and of good courage*[b], that is, strengthen thyself and be resolute. It was *verbum sapienti:* 'he did so.'

Lastly, he was a man of extraordinary piety and devotion; in this he showed himself to be the true son of the holy David.

We are not to inquire, whether Solomon served God with the same circumstances of religion as David his father; for so it is said, that *Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father*[c]. It is true, from the particle דק following, some learned men have inferred, that the outward circum-

[t] Quia enim Deus vult honorari superiores, vult etiam ut ipsi honorem suum tueantur.—Pareus Corp. Doct. p. 3. q. 104. lib. 2. [8vo Han. 1634.]

[x] Afranius, Faustus, Sylla, filia Pompeii,—Florus, [iv. 2, 90.] Suet. [Cæsar. c. 75.] Dio Cass. [xliii. 12.]

[y] Adag. Vet. Sen. Ep. 86. [85.]

[z] Sal. Orat. ad Cæs. 2. [al. Ep. i. c. 1.]

[a] 1 Kings ii. 9. [b] 1 Chr. xxviii. 20.

[c] 1 Kings iii. 3.

stances of his worship were not altogether so laudable as his inward sincerity and devotion[d]; because, whereas there was but one legal high place of worship ordained by Moses[e], he did nevertheless, in imitation of the ancient patriarchs, permit their use in the plural number[f]. But leaving this dispute to the more learned, I here only take notice, that as this was not sufficient to obstruct God's indulgence and great love towards him; so it could be no bar to his people's prayers and praises: for as Solomon loved the Lord, so the Lord loved him, and blessed him with immensity of wisdom and justice; and this appears from the following passage to be the undoubted reward of his exemplary piety. And now, to sum up all, this incomparable wisdom, this indefatigable industry, this justice, resolution, constancy and piety, might well deserve the acclamation and daily applause of his people; and if Solomon did justly deserve his people's praise, behold this day a prince not inferior to Solomon.

The wisdom of this one year's reign will equal all the history of that eastern prince. And as for all those other qualifications which I have mentioned, it is but too plain that I have strained the character of Solomon to make it bear some proportion with that of our king; and still the faint lines come short of a resemblance. But if undaunted courage and bravery in battle, (a virtue that never was experienced in Solomon,) the voluntary exposing of his person for the good of his country, the repeated instances of his love and affections to it, and such other his more peculiar and characteristical virtues, were to be insisted upon; it would require such sentences as Solomon's to declare his worth.

But I come not here to usurp upon fame's province; his name is already spread as far as Solomon's, and shall continue as long as his, as long as the world shall endure.

But sure the obligations of his subjects to him are far greater than any people ever lay under, and ought therefore to be paid in the most dutiful and solemn manner; that great tribute of praise as well as of prayer.

Give me leave likewise herein to offer you some few directions, and so I will conclude. The church directs us to praise

[d] Deut. xii. 13, 14; 2 Chr. i. 3.

[e] לחדוד Targ. Jonath.

[f] Diodat. in 1 Kings iii. 3.

God, "not only with our lips but in our lives." We may take the same instruction in praising God's vicegerent. He best praises the lawgiver who lives most conformable to his laws; and the greatest panegyric upon Cæsar is, to obey his commands: they are the only flatterers whose hearts and tongues do not go together; and it is our duty to praise our prince, and not to flatter him. Nothing can be grosser than to praise the king's wisdom, and yet at the same time to prefer our own above it. *My lord the king*, saith Mephibosheth, *is an angel of God;* but then he thought so as well as said it; and therefore resigned all he had in the world to the king's dispose. All distrust and jealousy is inconsistent with praise; for this must proceed from love, and *love casteth out fear*. We have a prince that of all mankind ought the most to be trusted; because it is not in our powers to provoke him more to break his word than we have done. Our provocations have been so great, that nothing but his sacred word could stand between us and his anger. But this must not encourage us to use him ill; for though the decree for our good is gone out of the king's mouth, yet it is not ratified by God without good conditions. We have been grievous delinquents, and are now but upon good behaviour, and lives as well as hearts are in God's hand.

Bishop Andrewes terms kings the treasurers of the people[g]: if so, we at present have a most inestimable treasure. But then he bids us remember, that *we have these treasures in earthen vessels*[h]. Let us have a great care and use it tenderly, that we, together with our prince, may *see our children's children, and peace upon Israel.*

Our blessing is to us but a new comer; we hardly know yet what it is that we enjoy. Consider but one particular, that the English nation for this last year hath been a greater terror abroad than for some ages before; at least ways, it is in our power to be so, only by this, in not being a terror to ourselves. Let but the English praise and love their king, and all the world will soon stand in awe of him. Not that he trusts in his own strength, or in the arm of flesh, but in his God: in his right and in his innocence. Witness that one act of his, whereby, in the assembly now in being, he would not (what others would perhaps) have excluded his exclusioners. But there is no occa-

[g] Conc. Lat. [Aug. 6, 1606. Opp. posthum. p. 55 sqq.] [h] 2 Cor. iv. 7.

sion to be loud and importunate in our praises; they will be best understood by our being still and quiet. Let us all φιλοτιμεῖσθαι, 'make it our ambition' to be so. It should be our ambition, because it is our interest; nay, we see it is to no purpose to be otherwise[i]: it is but a folly to resist so often the plain and visible hand of Providence; the injuries and affronts that are done to majesty still turn to blessings. And, as to our prince in particular, God hath as plainly and manifestly protected him from all his enemies, as if with our own eyes we had seen him guarded with a flaming sword, or resting his head under an angel's wing. God Almighty hath given him so many and such signal deliverances, that we should be even faithless if we did not believe that it can never be in the power of men or devils to hurt him. So that God will reign, and the king will reign, *be the people never so unquiet.*

God hath judged the king, and hath pleaded his cause against an ungodly nation. *He hath*[k] *delivered him from the deceitful and unjust man; the Lord hath rewarded him according to his righteousness, according to the cleanness of his hands hath he recompensed him*[l].

And now the king will be sure to live peaceably and quietly himself. He is resolved to stand fast like a rock in the midst of his ocean; neither the raging waves of the sea nor the madness of the people shall ever remove him from his centre. He is resolved to deserve praise, and to have it too, if not from his people, yet from his God[m].

To conclude then with the words of this Psalm,

His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever, Amen, and Amen.

[i] 1 Thess. iv. 7.
[k] Psalm xliii. 1.
[l] Psalm xviii. 20.
[m] Ὅ κέ με τιμήσουσι, μάλιστα δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς.—Hom. Il. l. 1. [175.]

A SERMON

PREACHED ON ST. MARK'S DAY, 1686,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN.

A SERMON

PREACHED ON ST. MARK'S DAY, 1686.

EPHESIANS iv. 14.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, &c.

THESE words, which are a part of the epistle for this day, contain a principal reason why God furnished his church with such variety of gifts, and so many ministers of the gospel of his grace, as you read of in the foregoing verses.

Where the apostle observes, verse 8, that after our blessed Lord was raised from the lower parts of the earth and ascended up into heaven, *He gave gifts unto men, and filled all things*, verse 10.

And some (he proceeds to show) were made apostles, who were the chief ministers of Christ, the witnesses of his resurrection, the great luminaries of the world, by the laying on of whose hands the Holy Ghost was given unto others.

And next to them he placed prophets, who were inspired persons that had an excellent faculty of expounding the old Scriptures which prophesied of Christ, and foretold the things that they now preached; and did also in some cases foretell, like the prophets in ancient time, what was to come to pass hereafter in the church of Christ.

After whom followed evangelists, of which rank was St. Mark, whose memory is this day celebrated. They were men who accompanied the apostles and went about with them in their travels, to be sent by them as they were by Christ, either to preach the gospel where they could not go themselves, or to confirm and strengthen those in the faith whom they had already converted. Thus St. Mark attended upon St. Peter, whose disciple he was, as not only Eusebius and St. Hierom,

but Irenæus himself, who was more ancient, assure us. He is thought to be the person mentioned by St. Peter in the latter end of his first epistle, verse 13, where he calls him *Marcus my son;* and is said by the authors before mentioned to have written his Gospel at the request of the converts of St. Peter, from whom, they say, he went to Alexandria, and there founded a church, of which he himself was the first bishop.

Now after all these, (apostles, prophets and evangelists,) last of all there were pastors and teachers; who were apostolical men, settled and fixed in those churches which had been gathered by the apostles, to be their constant governors and instructors, when the apostles could no longer stay with them.

All these were endued with divine gifts according to the measure that Christ pleased to bestow upon them, as you read ver. 7. And he bestowed these gifts on them for three ends, which are named, verse 12, first, *for the perfecting of the saints.* That is, to complete those who were already called into the state of Christianity, to supply their defects, and to make up what was wanting, which is the meaning of the Greek word καταρτισμός. Secondly, *for the work of the ministry,* that they might bring others into the church who were not yet made Christians, which seems to be the proper *work of the ministry,* as it stands here distinguished from the former, and from what follows. Which was, thirdly, *for the edifying of the body of Christ,* the building up the whole church together in knowledge and piety, till they all came into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, and grew to be such perfect men as not to be *carried about any more like children, with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lay in wait to deceive*[a].

This, in short, is the coherence of my text, in which I shall observe to you these three things:

I. That this apostolical church of Ephesus was disturbed with variety of doctrines, and with controversies in religion.

II. That it was a childish thing to be unsettled by this variety or contrariety of doctrines.

III. That God did not leave his church without the means of being settled and steadfast in the true faith of Christ, not-

[a] Ephes. iv. 10.

withstanding those blasts of contrary doctrine, and notwithstanding the cunning and craft wherewith they were managed.

I.

First, I say, these words suppose that the church to which the apostle writes was disturbed by variety of doctrine, and by controversies in matters of religion. For when he saith, that *henceforth they should not be tossed to and fro*, &c., it suggests that they had been wavering and unsettled; apt to be moved away from the faith of the gospel by the impetuous assaults that were made upon them by some cunning deceivers.

I call them impetuous, because these doctrines, which were different from or contrary unto the faith of the gospel, were pressed with such earnestness, that the apostle compares them to a blast of wind; and not barely to a blast, but to a storm or tempest. Which is the meaning of the word κλυδωνιζόμενοι, 'tossed to and fro,' as a ship is in a furious storm: for so κλύδων, from whence it is derived, literally imports; signifying here that the false teachers who disturbed the church were very vehement, or rather violent; making up in confidence what they wanted in truth.

Such were the Jewish deceivers, whom the apostle (in Phil. iii. 2.) compares to dogs, who impudently assaulted the faithful, and endeavoured to rend and tear the church all in pieces. Such were the philosophical pretenders by whom the Colossians were in danger to be forcibly carried away from the faith, and made a prey to a company of thieves and robbers: *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit* [a].

Which last word, as well as my text, gives you the reason why I said the church was troubled with the impetuous assaults of some deceivers. For they added much craft, subtilty, and juggling to their violence and zealous confidence. Which is compared here (in the latter part of this verse) to that sleight of hand wherewith cunning gamesters cogg the die: and is further illustrated by a second word, importing such subtilty as we have no one English word to express, and therefore render it by two, *cunning craftiness*: and that, thirdly, so artificially managed, that it was according to a method of deceit, (or an orderly proceeding in their cheats,) as the last words are in the

[a] Coloss. ii. 8.

Greek, which we translate, *Whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

I note these things very briefly, only to show what manner of men they were who troubled the church of Christ in the apostles' days. They were bold, and they were crafty; confident and cunning; busy and boisterous; and withal very subtle and insinuating. So busy they were, that as a storm of wind troubles the whole sea upon which it falls, so these men disturbed the church of Christ every where throughout the world. For I think I may safely affirm, that there was not so much as one church mentioned in the holy writings but was disturbed, if not in danger to be overturned by these blasts of strange doctrine; which, like a tempest, raged in all places where the gospel was preached.

Nobody can be ignorant how the church of Jerusalem (the very mother church) was troubled by men that pressed a very dangerous error upon them. For they who taught, *Except men were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved,* came from Judæa, as you read Acts xv. 1.

In the church of Rome itself there were those who taught that men must be *justified by the works of the law:* as appears from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

In the Corinthian church there were those who denied even the doctrine of the resurrection; and thereby went about to subvert the Christian faith.

The churches of Galatia were so infected with Judaical errors, that they were almost *removed from him that called them unto the grace of Christ into another gospel*[b].

The Philippians, as I said before, had *dogs* among them, *evil workers,* who were of the *concision,* as the apostle sarcastically calls them[c].

The Colossians stood in need of a caution against *vain philosophy,* and such false reasonings as under the colour of humility seduced men unto the *worshipping of angels*[d]. And so I might lead you through all the rest, till we come to the seven famous churches of Asia; unto whom our Lord Christ himself directed particular letters after he went to heaven. From which we learn that there were such impudent deceivers among them as pretended to the gift of prophecy, and yet seduced

[b] Gal. i. 6. [c] Philip. iii. 2. [d] Coloss. ii. 8, 18.

Christ's servants to idolatry[e]. In short, there were *depths of Satan*, ver. 24, profound mysteries of diabolical deceit, to overthrow the faith of Christ.

And if it were thus immediately after our Saviour's ascension to heaven, and while the apostles were alive, who were full of the Holy Ghost; no wonder that the church was afterwards infested with divers heresies; as appears by the first four general councils, wherein they were condemned. Particularly this church of Ephesus, and those in Asia depending on it; whom St. Paul forewarns of this, when he took his leave of them, and told them they should see his face no more, *that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock: also of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw disciples after them*[f]. And therefore it ought still to be the less wonder to any of us if the condition of the church be the same now, at this great distance from the apostolical times: since men were so bold as in the very face of the apostles, at least as soon as their backs were turned on any place, to contradict their doctrine, and teach another gospel.

From which we may evidently draw these three conclusions:

I. First, there is no cause to forsake that church of which we are members, or so much as to have the worse opinion of it, because there are contentions in it about matters of religion.

They that have had a principal hand in raising disputes, and making divisions upon them, are the men that object this to us, and make it an argument against us. But without any reason, for when they have said all that they can, we have as much *unity of faith* among us as they had in the first churches planted by the apostles themselves. In which there were several winds of doctrine stirring, and many errors; which made as great a disturbance then (if not greater) than hath been made among us.

Who in the main articles of faith are all of one mind; and our differences are in lesser and secondary things, which belong not to the primitive doctrines of the Christian religion. Which whosoever opposes, we own him not, but look upon him as in a faction against the church; which is not thereby broken, nor the unity of its faith destroyed. For though some men have

[e] Rev. ii. 20. [f] Acts xx. 29, 30.

preached strange doctrines, and drawn disciples after them, (which is no more than they did in the apostles' days,) yet they have not prevailed against this church, nor overturned its faith. But as boisterous waves (to keep to the metaphor in the text) beating against a rock dissolve into froth, so have these blasts of contrary doctrine made a vain and fruitless disturbance among us. Some looser parts of the people have been carried away, (to their own shame, not ours,) while the main body of our church, like an unmovable rock, still persists in firm unity: in as great unity as was anciently in any of the apostolical churches, and that is abundantly sufficient.

II. Secondly, we may further conclude from what hath been said, that if we knew where to find an infallible guide and judge, it would not put an end to controversies, nor hinder errors from springing up and pestering the church of Christ. For when there was such an authority, it could not do this which is desired.

All allow the apostles to have been infallible; and yet you see there were various winds of doctrine, and some of them very dangerous, in the churches which they planted: whereby those churches were divided into parties, which by the apostolical authority could not be perfectly united.

St. Paul, for instance, interposes his authority with the church of Corinth, in his First Epistle, for the making up all divisions which he heard were among them[g]. And yet notwithstanding, it appears by his Second Epistle, (xi. 2, 3, 4, 13, 14,) that they still continued; so that their minds were in danger *to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* And the epistle of Clemens to that church, not long after, informs us that these divisions and contentions grew into a kind of sedition one against another.

More than this, the Author of our faith, Christ Jesus, though he spake with the highest authority, yet did not by this put an end to the disputes that were between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and other sects among the Jews. No, it was so far from having this effect, that the church of the Jews, who were instructed by this infallible teacher, fell into the most damnable error; not only rejecting him, but putting him to death.

Yes, will some say, because they did not own his infallibility.

[g] 1 Cor. i. 10, 11, &c.

True. But can any other teacher, though he could justly pretend to this prerogative, hope to prevail with men, when the Saviour of the world could not? Will any man or church expect to be universally acknowledged, and make an end of all differences, when the Son of God could not meet with such regard and acceptance in the world? Is it possible for any men's infallibility (could we suppose it) to be better attested than the Lord Christ's was? Can the disciples convince men more than their Master did? If that be a hopeless thing, then there will be controversies, even about this infallibility. Which leads to the third thing.

III. It appears plainly from hence, that God never intended all errors should be kept out of the church by an infallible authority. No, directly contrary; St. Paul saith, *There must be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest*[h]: that is, God thinks it just that men should be permitted to follow their own foolish conceits, when they will not be guided by the plain directions of his holy gospel. By which means sincere and upright men are discovered; and all men are tried whether they will obey the truth, or turn aside unto unrighteousness.

There must be a trial made of men; and therefore such order must not be taken as to make it impossible there should be any heresies. No, God hath left it more than possible there should; for there *must be heresies*, that there may be approbation made of believers, whether they will sincerely adhere to the plain truths of Christian religion, or part with them for pleasing and gainful errors.

Besides, if God had intended to prevent this, by establishing an infallible guide to whom all should resort, he would have declared this intention the most plainly of all other things. And have told us also where to find such an authority, and not have left this to be controverted and disputed, which was intended to be the end of controversies.

More especially, if any one particular church was to have this authority over all other churches, it would have been most needful that this should have been so clearly taught as to have put it out of all doubt. For we can see no reason, not so much

[h] 1 Cor. xi. 19.

as that of convenience, why one church should have it, and all others want it: but in reason every church should have it, if it were to be had, that men might not be put to the trouble of going far for infallible direction.

And as for that church which now pretends to it, there is the clearest evidence that no church anciently thought it to have more authority than other churches, who looked upon themselves as her equals.

I speak of the church of Rome; whose determinations and traditions in matters of doctrine were rejected by St. Cyprian, Firmilianus, and the rest of the African bishops: who write to the pope (as every one knows who reads St. Cyprian's epistles[i]) not as their superior, but as their good brother, their colleague, their fellow priest: rebuking him with much sharpness, taxing him for pretending vainly to apostolical authority where he had none; and for not conforming himself to the rule of truth and peace delivered by the apostle; and in downright terms affirming, that every bishop in the administration of his church hath power to act according to his own judgment, and that none could impose laws upon another.

And as for matters of ceremony, all the bishops of the East refused to submit to him; challenging as much authority from St. John as the Roman bishop did from St. Peter. This is notorious in the famous question about Easter; and sufficient to show the truth of what Æneas Sylvius could not but confess before he came to be a pope; that "little respect was had to the Roman church before the council of Nice[j]."

And that council expressly decreed the ancient customs should be every where observed. By which Antioch and Alexandria claimed the same authority over the churches subject to their jurisdiction, that the Roman bishop did within his diocese. And thus it continued for many years after, nor do the greater part, by far, of the Christian world at this day own any such authority over them as the bishop of Rome now challenges.

Let us not therefore be shaken by this *wind of doctrine*, no more than by any other wherewith this church hath been troubled. For there is no such infallible authority left in the

[i] Vid. Epist. lxxii. lxxv. edit. Oxon. [pp. 196–217.]
[j] [Epist. cclxxxviii. p. 802 D.]

church for the deciding all controversies, much less can that church lay the sole claim to that authority there is left in it; or if it could justly pretend to the highest, it would not be able to do what a far more miraculous authority could not effect: and there are other means of unity and peace prescribed by God, which if men will not embrace, there must be discords and dissensions whereby the integrity or falseness of every man's heart will be discovered.

What means those are you shall see anon, when I have spoken a few words of the second observation, which now follows.

II.

It is a childish thing to be unsettled in religion, because of this difference or contrariety of doctrine wherewith the church is at any time troubled. So the apostle might well call it, because there being (as I have lately shown you) a form of wholesome words left by them in every church which they planted, a summary of sound doctrine, called *the faith once delivered to the saints;* there could be no reason that any men who had this deposited with them should be unresolved what to believe, and unsettled by the preaching of other doctrine; but their instability proceeded merely from the weakness of their understanding and the strength of their passions.

These two things are remarkable in little children; as their understandings are weak, so their passions are strong, and their desires violent. From whence it comes to pass that they are not only credulous, but fickle and newfangled, (as we speak,) delighting in that to-day which they throw away to-morrow. These make them rash and hasty, apt to quarrel one with another about little differences, and dispose them to be taken with empty shows and pageantry, with things that affect the senses and have a glistering appearance, though void of all inward goodness and solid worth and usefulness.

In short, while we are children in understanding, we are naturally injudicious, and consequently inconstant. We do not judge aright of things that differ, and so are carried uncertainly *to and fro*, as the apostle here speaks, from one thing to another, and many times from better to worse; especially when we meet with confident people who easily impose upon us.

This is a very dangerous estate, and therefore it highly con-

cerns us to get out of it, by growing in knowledge and wisdom, imitating little children only in our endeavours to be without guile, but labouring, as the apostle speaks, in understanding to be men, and to have a thorough knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

This St. Peter prescribes as a remedy against unsteadfastness, in the conclusion of his Second Epistle; *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things, beware lest ye also, being carried away by the error of the wicked, fall from your stedfastness; but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Who, it is most certain, hath not left us in doubt what to believe, and what to hold and retain with a firm resolution; nor exposed us, without any help for it, to be carried away by the error of the wicked; but abundantly provided us with all things necessary for the knowledge of the truth, and for our improvement therein, unto a state of steadfast belief. Which is the third thing.

III.

We are not left by God without the means of being settled in the faith, notwithstanding the blasts of contrary doctrine which may be in the church, and notwithstanding the cunning and craftiness whereby they may be managed. For it is the very scope of the apostle in this place, to convince the Ephesians that God had taken such care and made such provision, that they *might not henceforth be children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,* &c. There was a remedy then against this lightness and inconstancy, it was possible to discern truth from falsehood, the Christian faith from the vain doctrines which troubled the church; and if they did not continue children, they might continue steadfast in that faith, and not be moved from it by the violent blasts of contrary persuasions.

God did not think fit, as you have heard, to lay such a restraint upon men's spirits, that none should be able to contradict the truth preached by the apostles; but permitted *false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ,* for the trial and exercise of the faithful, whom he furnished with sufficient means to preserve themselves in a settled constant belief.

What those means were I shall briefly lay before you, as I find them partly here, and partly in other places of the apostolical writings; and shall treat of them with a particular respect to ourselves, that we may be established in the truth of his holy gospel.

First, nothing is to be admitted without good proof.

Secondly, in the proof we make of doctrines, the holy Scriptures must be the rule whereby we judge.

Thirdly, in the use of this rule we must take direction of our spiritual guides and governors.

And lastly, we must live in the sincere practice of all other duties of Christian piety.

First, the first direction is that of this apostle St. Paul to the Thessalonians; *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good*[k]. Which is the same with that of St. John; *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*[l]. From whence it is likely Dionysius of Alexandria formed that precept, which he calls an apostolical voice: Γίνεσθε δόκιμοι τραπεζῖται, 'Be ye skilful bankers, able to distinguish between good and bad silver[m].'

Children indeed, having not the faculty of discerning, take all upon trust; but it is a shame, if being arrived at the state of manhood, we do not prove, and try, and examine (as the word signifies) every thing that is offered to our belief; which we ought not to receive merely because confident men would impose it upon us by their authority. And if it will not abide a proof, nor stand a trial, we may be certain it is deceitful ware which they would put off in the dark, and not have brought into the light.

Now in this proof we must be very serious; for nothing can be examined thoroughly without an attentive mind. Which we must awaken to ponder and consider every thing in the use of the best reason we have; and whatsoever appears upon examination and proof to be agreeable to the faith once delivered to the saints, that we must hold fast, and not suffer ourselves to be carried from it by any importunities of contrary affections. For as we must receive nothing without good reason, so

[k] 1 Thess. v. 21. [l] 1 John iv. 1. [m] Euseb. l. vii. Hist. Eccles. cap. 7.

we ought not lightly to forsake that which we have good reason to believe.

When I speak of reason, I do not mean bare natural reason without the guidance of God's grace: for which we must heartily pray, and he no doubt will readily vouchsafe unto all those who seriously seek for it, with a desire to be led by it in the ways of truth and holiness. For having given us his Son, and by him revealed his mind and will unto us, it is infidelity to think that he will not guide us by his grace, to understand his mind and will in all things necessary to our salvation. Far be such a thought from our hearts; which ought to rest satisfied that he will give us his grace to direct us, as freely as he hath given us his Son Christ to enlighten and instruct us. He is as little sparing of his grace, as the visible sun is of its beams; which shine into the eyes of all those who do not by wilful winking shut it out, and thereby make themselves, not the sun, guilty of their blindness.

If we love darkness rather than light, or will not be at the pains to open our eyes and let it in, but instead thereof give up ourselves to be led about by others; as they shall please to conduct us; it is but just with God to deprive us of the power of judging aright, and not to let us see when we would, because we would not when we might.

He hath given us the use of reason, which if we will blindly resign to any pretended authority, what is it but to shut our eyes when we should open them; or suffer ourselves to be hoodwinked, when we should look about us that we be not deceived? We can give no account of this to God; who did not give us this talent that we should give it away to others, but that we should faithfully employ and improve it ourselves. He never intended that we should let others judge for us, but requires us to examine and judge ourselves whether there be reason to receive that which is propounded to us by others.

This is so great a truth, that they who receive things without examination, upon mere trust, yet have some reason for what they do. For no man trusts another, till he hath reason to think he is an honest man and will not deceive him. He doth not take his bare word for it that he will not deceive him, but hath some ground or other to think he will be as good as his word. Insomuch that they who seem least to trust to their

own reason, do really trust it in the weightiest matter; when they trust it to choose one for them whom they may trust.

They of the Roman church, I mean, who would have us give up our reason to their authority, do not pretend to persuade us to submit to that authority without some reason for it. And to be persuaded by reason, as hath been long ago said, that to their authority we ought to submit our reason, is still to follow reason, and not to quit it, and blindly resign it. And if we must follow reason in that, why not in all things whatsoever? Why is it not as good a judge of any thing, as of their authority? What reason can be given for using our reason in this single affair, and relinquishing it ever after? Is it not the same reason still? Was it not given us for our constant safe-conduct? By what reason then do we trust others to choose our religion for us, without examining whether what they say be true or no, but taking it barely upon their word?

How do they know that to be true which they propound to us? May not we know it by the same means? and rely not merely upon their authority, but upon the same reason that they do? For they say what they deliver to us, either with reason or without. If with reason, we ought to judge whether it be a good reason or no; for why should not we judge as well as they, since God hath intrusted us with a faculty whereby to judge?

If without reason, we ought not to follow an authority which presses things to be believed upon no ground; but to look upon those as the most sincere and faithful directors, who would have us to examine and prove, consider and ponder all things well, before we receive them; and who offer to us their assistance therein, that we may see with our own eyes what God himself hath delivered to us in his holy Word. Which brings me to the next thing.

Secondly, In this proof which we make of every thing propounded to us, the Scriptures ought to be the rule whereby we judge.

We have no other, I have formerly shown you: and they are abundantly sufficient for us; and so authentic, that our blessed Lord himself, and his apostles after him, constantly appealed to them for the proof of their doctrine. And as they referred all men to the old Scriptures, *saying no other thing but what the*

prophets and Moses did say should come[l]; so we can send them no whither else for their information, but to the same Scriptures and to the New Testament; according to which if any men do not speak, they are not to be received. Nay, St. Austin ventured to imitate St. Paul, and to say[m], "Let him be accursed, whosoever he be, (I will not say *we*, who are not worthy to be compared with him that said *Though we*, but *Though he be an angel from heaven*,) who declares to you any thing of Christ, or of his church, or of any other matter that belongs to our faith and life, besides that which ye have received in the legal and evangelical Scriptures."

Unto which the same St. Paul sends Timothy himself for his instruction in both his Epistles to him. Where he commands him to give attendance to *reading*, viz. of the holy Scriptures: which he *had known from a child*, and which *were able*, he tells him, *to make him wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. They being *given by inspiration of God, that* even *a man of God* (like the ancient prophets) *might be perfected, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works*, for every part of his employment[n].

Which place I have explained not long ago, and now mention it again; because the apostle directs him to these holy writings, as a means to preserve him in the true Christian belief: *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures*[o], &c. What we have learned out of the holy Scriptures, we have an assurance of; we know from whom they come, and are certain we are taught by God when we read these holy books: but cannot be assured of any other tradition which is not contained here, and therefore ought to continue steadfast in our adherence to the Scriptures; and both to suspect those who would draw us from this hold, and stick to those guides who bid us stick to this, and prove all things by it. For it is evident they have no mind to deceive us, but do, in effect, bid us believe God and follow his directions, and rely upon his authority: who cannot mislead us, and will not suffer us to be misled, if

[l] Acts xxvi. 22.
[m] L. iii. contra liter. Petiliani, cap. 6. [tom. ix. col. 301 E.]
[n] 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.
[o] Ver. 14.

we *continue in the things which we have learnt out of the holy Scriptures.*

For, taking them to be our rule, we shall neither admit any thing which is contrary to that rule, nor shall we take any thing to be an essential part of the Christian faith which is not there delivered unto us. For it is not consistent with the notions we have of God's infinite goodness and wisdom to believe he would give us a rule which is defective in necessary things. No; he hath abundantly provided here for our instruction in all such matters: and as we ought to refuse that which contradicts any part of these holy books, so we ought not to think it necessary that we should entertain any thing which they do not teach us.

And teach us plainly and evidently: for in all necessary things they are very clear and perspicuous; else they could not be a rule unto us, but we must seek for some other. The Apostles' Creed, for instance, (which the ancients called The immovable rule of faith, A short summary of Christian belief, beyond which, as they speak, we ought not to seek for faith,) together with the Nice Creed, and Athanasius's, which expound the Apostles', "ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for that they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture." But "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

This is the doctrine of our church in its sixth and eighth Articles: unto which let us strictly keep, if we would not be carried to and fro uncertainly with the blasts of vain doctrines, which have no "certain warrants" in the holy Scriptures, and therefore are not be received; or are contrary to them, and therefore are to be rejected. Here we must fix, and believe that here we are safe. For the Scriptures want nothing to complete us in Christian wisdom, which they do not wrap up in obscurity, but, as far as is needful, give us a clear understanding of the doctrines of faith: and make us understand withal, if we please to consider them, that having laid our foundation well in a firm belief of those great and necessary things, which, out of the Scriptures, are summed up in the creeds before named; we need not trouble ourselves about

other matters which are not so evident; but make it our whole business in this world to raise the solid superstructure of a holy life upon the foundation of faith in Christ.

This is the second thing: the holy Scriptures are the rule whereby we must prove all things; from which if we do not depart, we cannot be led into any dangerous errors. Provided,

Thirdly, that in the use and application of this rule we take the direction of our spiritual guides and governors.

In some things, as I said, there is difficulty; and where there is none, the cunning of deceivers may so perplex things and entangle our understandings, that we may not know what to think. In which case, especially, we ought to seek for the assistance of those that are better able to judge than ourselves. Which is the very means of stability and constancy which the apostle here recommends in my text. For having shown how God appointed several orders of men in the church, not only apostles, prophets, and evangelists, but also pastors and teachers, *for the perfecting of the saints,* &c., he lets them know that by these means God expected that they should not be *henceforth children, tossed to and fro, and carried away with every wind of doctrine.* For this purpose were pastors and teachers more particularly settled in the church, that they might be instruments of settling others. After the apostles, and prophets, and evangelists had revealed the mind and will of God to men, pastors and teachers were left in every church, to help them both to understand what the other great men had revealed, and to detect the forgeries of false apostles, who went about to supplant the Christian doctrine.

These *gifts*, as the apostle here calls them, were bestowed last of all; being intended to remain after the other ceased. And accordingly you are blessed with them in this age, as they were in the beginning; and they are placed over you for the same end that they were at first, that you may advise with them as persons whose business it is to study the holy Scriptures, and to guide God's people by them in the way of truth. For this they are better qualified than any other persons, and therefore ought to be consulted by the people. Who must not be so bold as to lean merely to their own understanding, but listen also unto them: not, indeed, as infallible; but as men of the best understanding, both by their office, and by their study,

pains, and experience: whereby they are enabled to discover the frands and sophistry of deceivers, and to open, better than any else can do, the true meaning of the holy Scriptures.

Their guidance therefore the apostle to the Hebrews also commends as a remedy against their instability in religion: *Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow*, &c. *Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein*[1]. Where one mark is given them whereby to know what guides to follow: such as established their hearts in true grace and goodness, not those that troubled them with unprofitable disputes about meats and drink, and such like things; which were pressed by Judaical teachers, but made those who observed them not one jot the better; if they did not make them worse by taking off their hearts from more substantial duties.

And truly there is the same mark of distinction at this day. All men follow some guides or other; but they alone ought to be followed, who lead men, not by their own authority, but by the direction of the holy Scriptures; whose main study it is to understand the Scriptures themselves, and then to make others understand them; who do not hide those books from the people, but exhort them to look into them and read them seriously, and to learn therein, above all things, to be godly and virtuous, to mortify all evil affections and passions, to purify themselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Such guides you are bound in conscience to advise withal, and not lightly to forsake their conduct. For if they of the contrary persuasion follow their guides with an implicit faith, and a kind of blind obedience, being scarce permitted to use their reason; how can our people answer it to God, if they will not take heed to those who bid them open their eyes and see, and examine and prove what they offer to them, by the rule of the holy Scriptures; in the use of the most impartial and unbiassed reason, which God hath bestowed upon them, and wherewith they can assist them?

It is not easy to apprehend how great a sin they are guilty

[1] Heb. xiii. 7, 8, 9.

of, who neglect such guidance. And I must take the freedom to tell you, that to listen to other pretended guides, neglecting those of the church of England, under whom ye have been bred, whose conversation you know, by whom you have been long instructed, and had sufficient proof of their abilities, is an inexcusable sin, and an unaccountable folly. For in all reason you ought to have a greater reverence to the priests of our church, than to those of any other communion; who cannot be presumed to know better than ours do, nor to have more concern and care to guide you aright than ours have.

And therefore as none of you, I hope, will be carried away from the faith of this church by any wind of doctrine whatsoever; so you will not, I trust, so much as entertain a doubt of the truth here believed, without consulting with the pastors and teachers of it; who are able to preserve you from falling, by God's grace and blessing upon your and their honest endeavours. You ought to make a great conscience of this: if you chance to be staggered by any objection, repair to those whom God hath appointed to settle your minds, and preserve you upright. Nay, if there were nothing of conscience in it, yet it is but a due respect to them under whose ministry you have many years lived, not to forsake them upon any suggestions whatsoever, without hearing what they can answer to them; nor to think them less able and willing to direct you than any other persons, or less honest and careful in the directions they give, that neither you nor they may do amiss. Besides the weakness and levity, nay the folly and wickedness, it is a rude contempt of those, (whom you have the greatest reason to esteem,) and will be so judged at the dreadful day of our Lord to hearken to the voice of strangers, and give a perfect credit to them; without so much as consulting the judgment of those with whom you have been long acquainted.

Be not guilty, I beseech you, of such unmanly and unmannerly behaviour. Do not so much as admit the beginning of a doubt about your religion, without acquainting some of them with it, that they may resolve you; and, as St. Peter speaks (1 Pet. v. 12.), *exhort and testify to you that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.*

And in which you will always stand, if you observe one thing more, which in truth is the greatest of all.

Fourthly, live in the sincere practice of all other duties of Christian piety. For to do what we know to be the will of God, is the surest way to be preserved by him both in truth and in holiness. A godly life is the greatest security against all impostures. We shall never doubt of the truth of our belief, when we feel it hath effected the design of faith, by bringing forth the fruit of it, in all manner of virtue and godliness of living.

About which there is no doubt nor question, no dispute nor controversy; for all the parts of a holy life are as plainly set down in the holy Scriptures as that part of it now mentioned, *We beseech you, brethren, know* (that is, love) *them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves*[e]. All the rest, I say, are as express and clear and evident as this; whether they be our duties toward God or towards man, (whether superiors, equals, or inferiors,) or whether they concern the right government of ourselves, in all temperance, soberness, chastity, selfdenial, contentedness, and contempt of this present world.

Without which (I mean contempt of this present world) all the advice that can be given will signify little to secure us in the true religion. If this one thing be wanting, we are liable to be deceived, and none can help us. We shall turn, like weathercocks, by every wind of doctrine, if our interest lie that way; and it will not be in the power of any man, by the clearest and most solid demonstrations to fix and settle us. For the love of this present world, of riches, honours, and preferments, dazzles the eyes of men's minds, blinds their judgment, bribes their affections, corrupts their consciences, and carries them into the foulest dotages.

Religion and the things of the other world cannot be of any great price in his account, who admires and overvalues the things of this present life. Which will easily persuade him (as I had occasion to show you lately) when he cannot keep both, to let go his faith, that he may preserve these. And therefore, if we will stick fast to our religion, we must not cleave too

[e] 1 Thess. v. 11, 12.

close to this present world. We must not frame too high an opinion in our minds of any thing here, nor set our hearts and affections on it; but learn to want as well as to abound, to be satisfied with a little; and, as the apostle speaks, *having food and raiment, therewith to be content;* remembering that *godliness with contentment is great gain*[f].

Such lessons if we learnt and faithfully practised, (and there is no man that need be ignorant of them or defective in them, unless he will,) they would preserve and keep our minds from being drawn away by plausible and gainful errors. Nay, more than that, they would put an end to all controversies and disputes, better than an infallible judge could do. For when there was one in the world, there were still sects and factions, as I have already shown you: but if we would submit to the power of the gospel, and of God's holy Spirit, so far as to become obedient to the plain commands which he lays upon us; that is, to be made truly meek and lowly in heart, humble and peaceable, tender-hearted and charitable, holy and heavenly-minded; having no designs for this world, but all for the other; not intending to serve any earthly ends by our religion, but only to secure our soul's everlasting salvation; being sincere lovers of truth, desirous to know the whole will of God, ready to embrace it though never so cross to our present interests, conscientiously resolved to do it, whatsoever we deny or lose on that account; this temper of mind would be a far better expedient, and more available for the healing of all divisions, and for the making peace and unity in the Christian world, than infallibility of judgment would be, could we tell where to find it.

This is the way of God; wherein if we will not walk, there must be heresies, and contention, and strife: nay, there will be, as St. James's words are, *every evil work;* and no remedy can be found for it.

Whereas in this way, I will be bold to go a little further and say, that God hath taken care every particular Christian may be infallible, as far as is needful for him.

Much discourse and dispute there hath been and is about infallibility. And some, you know, argue there must be such

[f] 1 Tim. vi. 6, 8.

a thing, because of the care which we all believe Christ hath of his church: in which it would be convenient there should be an infallible judge; and therefore they conclude there is one. But if convenience were the measure, and our understanding the measurers, we might rather conclude that God hath made every particular Christian infallible; because that is far more convenient than for every Christian to go a great way to one infallible judge, and then not be able to know certainly where to find him; because they that speak of such a judge are not agreed whether he be a single person, or whether this infallibility do not lie in more than in one, nay, whether it be not in a many; but there is as great difference about this as any thing else whatsoever.

All that we can truly resolve therefore in this matter is, that such is the grace of God, such his care of his church, that he hath made every truly pious Christian infallible, though not in all things, yet in the main thing, if he go on to the end in a course of piety. That is, with respect to his journey's end he is infallible, though not with respect to every step he takes thither. He may err in many things, he may sometimes go wrong; yet if it be his constant design and watchful endeavour to govern himself faithfully in all his actions by the rule of God's word, and to follow all the directions herein, he shall infallibly come to heaven.

Let no men make you believe the contrary, though you do not believe every thing that they tell you is necessary. For God hath promised to *guide the meek in judgment*, and to *teach them his way. His secret is with them that fear him: and his covenant is to make them know it*[x]. They shall certainly understand all things needful; and be preserved from damnably erring in their judgment. God is faithful, and will keep them from falling into the error of the wicked; because they feared him greatly, doing his will sincerely as far as they knew it, and being ready and desirous to believe and obey it in all other things, if they could have known them to be his will.

Therefore let us neither decline this way, nor distrust it. Let us look upon this as the way of peace; and let us think ourselves safe in it. Let all carnal, let all worldly, let all dia-

[x] Psalm xxv. 9, 14.

bolical lusts and passions be mortified, and we shall not fail to know the truth: nay, all our differences will be at an end, or, if any remain, they will not be destructive either to charity, or that blessed unity which all good Christians desire to see in the church of Christ.

If all will not take this course, yet they who do shall stand as unmovable as a rock, though there be never such strong winds and violent gusts of doctrine abroad, that would blow them about. For it is only chaff, and straws, and such like light or loose things, which are carried about with the wind: solid and well-built houses stand firm and unshaken. And so will all they who are deeply grounded in holiness and humility. They will be steadfast and unmovable, and never be persuaded to follow any other doctrines than those they have received in this church, though pressed with never so much earnestness; because no doctrines whatsoever can make them better than they are, and, by the grace of God, intend to be.

And this truly is a plain direction whereby to judge of those doctrines which trouble the church. Do they tend to make men at all the better, if they do believe them? Will their hearts be more purged from all bad affections? Will they become more holy, more humble, more meek, more modest, more dead to this world, more kind, loving and charitable to all men, by entertaining those doctrines which are superadded to the Christian faith, into which we were baptized? Or, on the contrary, do they not give men's vices greater liberty? Do they not puff them up, as all windy knowledge doth? Will they not dispose us to be more highly conceited of ourselves, more arrogant, more angry, more impatient of contradiction, more uncharitable and censorious, more loose in our conversation, more unpeaceable and ungovernable? If we find these to be the fruits of such doctrines, we are assured thereby that they are not the true Christian doctrines, which have the quite contrary effects, and make men of another spirit.

To conclude, there is one piece of Christian piety wherewith all our works must be begun, continued, and ended; and that is earnest prayer to God: whom we must constantly beseech to pour the grace of his holy Spirit upon us, that we may not fail to follow all these directions, and that they may be effectual for our preservation.

To him let us address ourselves with all humility and fervent affection; imploring his gracious presence with us at all times, to enlighten our minds, to guide us in judgment according to his promise, to give us understanding in his holy word, to bestow upon us a spirit of discerning, that we may clearly perceive the difference of things, and not take evil for good, falsehood for truth; but the way of lying may be removed from us, and he may grant us his law graciously.

But above all things, let us beseech him to give us honest and good hearts, unbiassed by any carnal or worldly affections. Let us pray, with David in the Psalm now mentioned, that he would *incline our heart unto his testimonies, and not unto covetousness: turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken us in his way*[b]. For where the love of the world prevails, any gainful error may easily find entertainment.

And whensoever we find ourselves begin to be unsettled in the belief of that which upon the most serious and deliberate consideration we have judged to be the truth, whensoever the resolution we took upon that judgment begins to waver and shake, let us remember that we are under a temptation, and that every temptation is a deceit, and would put a cheat upon us, (for *every man is tempted*, saith St. James, *when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed*;) and thereupon let us apply ourselves to God with the greater diligence and earnestness for his grace to purify our hearts, that we may not be seduced by any bad affections, but *building up ourselves in our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, we may keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*[c].

Finally, the church itself hath put a prayer into our mouths in the collect for this day; in which let us not cease to make our humble and hearty requests to him, saying,

"O Almighty God, who hast instructed thy holy church with the heavenly doctrine of thy evangelist St. Mark, give us grace, that being not like children, carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of thy holy gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

[b] Psalm cxix. 36, 37. [c] Jude 20, 21.

ONE MEDIATOR:

A SERMON

ON

JOHN XVI. 23.

[Now first printed from the original manuscript in the library of Lambeth Palace.]

IMPRIMATUR

Concio cui titulus ONE MEDIATOR.

Sept. 4. 1688. Guil. Needham.

ONE MEDIATOR.

JOHN xvi. 23.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

THESE words are part of that comfort which our blessed Saviour bestowed upon his apostles, when he was about to leave them and go into the other world, to be our perpetual Advocate with the Father. They could not endure those doleful words, (as they sounded in their ears,) that he must *go away to him that sent him*, and that *within a little while they should not see him;* though he told them withal at the very same time[a], *that again after a little while and they should see him*, and that *he went to the Father*. They knew not what to make of this saying, as you find[b], and therefore he himself explains his meaning, which he tells them was this, that he must die, (which was his *going away*, so that they did not see him,) and after a little while rise from the dead (when he began *to visit them again*,) and to go to heaven from thence, to send the Holy Ghost upon them; by whom he let them see he could do more for them than he could have done if he had still remained with them in this world. Let them, for instance, but pray to God for any thing they desired, and make the request in his name, and he assures them he would presently answer their petition, and do the thing they desired. *In that day ye shall* ἐρωτήσετε, *ask me nothing*, (no more questions as you do now.) *Verily verily I say unto you*, (believe it as an undoubted truth,) whatsoever αἰτήσετε, ye shall ask or request *of the Father in my name, he will give it you*. Though you do not see me, nor

[a] Verse 16. [b] Verse 17, 18.

can speak with me as you do now, (as St. Chrysostom interprets,) do but mention my name to the Father, and he will presently resolve all your doubts.

In which words it is obvious to note three things:

First, a duty unto which all Christians are obliged, to ask of God what we want.

Secondly, a promise to encourage this duty: he will give what we ask.

Thirdly, the manner wherein we are to ask, if we hope to obtain our desires, which is in Christ's name.

The duty is that to which our own needs strongly press and continually urge us. The encouragement is one of the highest comforts we have in this world, and sometime our only comfort, to know that when all other hope fails us, we have a good God to whom we may recommend ourselves and all our concerns, with a confidence that he will take care of us, and give us all whatsoever we ask, provided it be agreeable to his will, as other places of Scripture explain it. This is matter of great joy, as our Saviour tells them in the words before my text, verse 22, and repeats again in the following words, for their full assurance of faith. *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full*[c].

It ought to be our serious care therefore to direct our prayers unto him in such a manner, that they may not fail to meet with success: which we may hope for to our infinite satisfaction, if we ask in the name of Christ.

That is the only thing I shall treat of at this present, and only briefly touch upon the other in the conclusion.

The meaning of which is explained in the ancient and present conclusion of the church's prayers, wherein we desire to be heard *per et propter Jesum Christum*, 'by and for the sake of Jesus Christ.' The latter of which (for the sake of Jesus Christ) is to desire to be heard upon the account of his merits, who offered himself a sacrifice for us, and is therefore in the highest favour and power with God. And to pray to be heard by Christ Jesus, is to desire and expect that those blessings which we pray God to grant for his sake may be conveyed and imparted to us through or by him, who is our Lord as well as Saviour; being a royal high priest, who sits at God's

[c] John xvi. 24.

right hand to dispense the blessings which he hath purchased by his sacrifice.

In short, to pray "in his name," is to beseech God for the sake of his Son, who by his death and passion hath merited the glorious office of being our only intercessor with him to grant our desires, and by him to send us the blessings for which he intercedes. Or, more briefly, it is to desire to be accepted by his sole recommendation of us, and our prayers to God, and by his royal authority in the heavens.

And when we mention only one of these sayings 'by or through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour,' we mean them both, which are comprehended in that word.

And I say by him alone, and that he is our only intercessor with God, because it is evident by the scope of my text, (as will appear in the process of this discourse,) that these words are to be interpreted as if our Lord had said, *Ye shall ask the Father in my name* alone, or make use of no other person but me to intercede with God for you, which shall be the whole business of this sermon to demonstrate, that we ought not to pray to God in the name or for the sake, and by the intercession, interest and authority of any other, but only of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

His name is sufficient, and therefore all other is superfluous, nay, there is no other name but his, which we can lawfully use, and therefore all other are superstitious.

For the proof of which I desire these three things may be duly weighed:

First, this is most plainly asserted in the holy Scripture, that there is but one Mediator between God and us, and he our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Secondly, this is not only asserted, but the contrary notion is there plainly condemned.

Thirdly, there are most manifest reasons for it, which demonstrate that none are qualified to be our Mediators with God, (or to present our prayers and make them acceptable,) but he alone.

I.

First, I say, this is plainly asserted in the holy Scripture, that there is but one Mediator between God and us, Christ Jesus: who is the only person in whose name we ought to pray, that is, by whom we ought to make our addresses to

God, and through whom we expect to be relieved. This I take to be the sense of the apostle's words in 1 Tim. ii. 5, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus;* as will appear from these four observations, which will fully demonstrate how pertinent this place is to my present purpose.

I. First, let it be noted that the general hope of the apostle in this discourse to Timothy is to regulate the prayers of Christian people in the daily service of the church.

With that he begins this part of his letter, ver. 1, 2. *I will therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority*, &c. And with the same he ends it, ver. 8. *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing.* There was nothing about which he would have Timothy to be more solicitously concerned than this, that such comprehensive prayers and thanksgivings were made to God by the church as might reach the needs of all mankind; especially of those upon whom the welfare of all men so much depends, as it doth upon kings, princes, and governors, for whom to pray and give thanks *is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour*[d].

II. Now that they might be sure to prevail, he directs them both unto whom they ought to pray, and by whom to address their prayers unto him; and that is unto God alone, by the sole mediation of Jesus Christ. It is manifest as I said before, the apostle is treating of prayer, and it is as manifest that when he saith there is one Mediator between God and us, he means there is but one; as it is that when he saith there is one God, he means there is no more but him alone. If the notion of one God excludes all other gods, then one Mediator excludes all other mediators. And we may no more use any other mediator besides Jesus Christ, who redeemed us, than pray to any other god but him who made us, and appointed (as you shall hear) his only Son to be the only Mediator for us all.

Thus it is evident the words of the apostle ought to be understood: there is one God and no other besides him, and in like manner one Mediator, besides whom there is no other. So that we may as well introduce more gods into our religion as more mediators.

[d] 1 Tim. ii. 3.

True, say they of the Roman church, there can be no other mediators of redemption, (whereof the apostle immediately speaks in the next words, *who gave himself a ransom for all,*) but we may apply ourselves to more mediators of intercession.

But this is directly contrary to the intention of St. Paul, who is here speaking, as I have shown, of praying for all men, and therefore must have respect to the Mediator who intercedes with God that our prayers may be accepted; and expressly saith that Mediator is but one and no more even for this very reason, because he is our only Redeemer by his precious blood.

III. Which is the third thing I would have observed, the way and means whereby he became our Mediator, or the assurance we have of acceptance through him; which is by his death and passion for our sake. He gave himself a ranson for us, *tanquam signum*, saith Aquinas, 'as a sign and token' that he is our Mediator, or, (as the Commentaries under St. Ambrose's name explain it,) that our Saviour might bring his mediatorship to perfection, he suffered himself to die. His death is the groundwork of all; the very foundation of his mediatorship in the heavens, (as you shall hear anon,) his intercession being nothing else but his representing to God and pleading the merits of his passion. And therefore none can intercede for us but he alone, because he alone suffered for us; none hath any passion to plead for us, but only he who gave himself a ransom for us; by virtue of which he interposes on our behalf.

IV. All this will appear still more clearly, if we attend to the immediate and more particular scope and drift of the apostle in these words, and that is to encourage our prayers for all men, (which is the general drift of them,) because *he would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth; for there is one God, and one Mediator*, &c. As much as to say, You may be satisfied of God's desire to have all men saved by embracing Christianity, and therefore not cease your prayers for them, by these plain reasons:

First, because there is but one God, the Creator of all men, both Jews and Gentiles, of believers and unbelievers; as Theodoret well explains it. Should we suppose more gods, we might thereupon fear that every one of them was partially affected to his peculiar creature, and to have no kindness for the rest, but rather concerned to hinder and divert those good

things from them which they desired should go only to their own. But these being assured by no more but one common Father of us all, from whom we received our being, we cannot reasonably entertain any such suspicions of him, but believe that he bears the same paternal affection unto all his offspring, who are alike created by him, and therefore alike the objects of his love.

2. Yes, might some think with themselves, if we had always remembered our Creator, we might have had this hope in him; but though God be our Father, alike related to us all, yet we are rebellious children, who have highly offended him, and some of us to such an height of provocation, that we may justly fear he will reject both us and all the suits we make to him. The apostle therefore adds this further comfort, that we have a Mediator, and he in great favour with God, who will stand between us and his offended majesty, to make our peace with him.

3. Lest anybody should fancy that there may be many mediators, some of which may have no regard unto us in particular, but only to such persons as they may have a special kindness for; he tells us withal, that as there is but one God, so there is but *one Mediator between God and men,* (not between God and the Jews, but between God and men in general,) who cannot be conceived to have such particular inclinations as make him mind only certain favourites, but to be so equally concerned for all that he will neglect none.

4. For he adds this new comfort, that he is of the same nature with ourselves; a man unto whom it belongs to love all other men, without exception, as himself. If he had been an angel, there might have been just doubt made whether he would mind all men: but being *the man Christ Jesus,* there can be no reasonable question whether he will stand equally affected unto those who are equally related unto him in the same human nature, which makes him such a man as all other men are.

5. But experience tells us that some men are very partial, and too prone to be carried aside by their particular inclinations, without respect to reason. And therefore the apostle adds still further, that our Mediator *is the man Christ Jesus;* who cannot be partial, being that Man who is God-man, (as I

shall show anon,) "anointed by the Holy Ghost to be the Saviour of the world," as one of our own divines[e] excellently expounds it.

Who, as he took our nature upon him that he might be a pitiful high priest to intercede with God faithfully for us, so he took it without the stamp of any individual properties, characters, or reference, (as the forenamed author observes.) to any one family or kindred, that we might conceive him as an impartial and unbiassed solicitor of our affairs with God; a Mediator between him and us, who is equally affected unto all, for he had no father according to the flesh, but was formed in his mother's womb by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost: that having neither father, brother, nor sister, no, nor mother like other men here upon earth, he might be carried by particular inclinations unto none, but stand indifferently affected unto all; and look upon every one who doth the will of his heavenly Father to be his sister, brother, and mother.

And lastly, to make him a completely impartial Mediator, he gave himself a ransom for all; God laid on him the iniquities of us all, and therefore who can doubt but he will plead the cause of all. What reason hath any man to suspect his acceptance with God, or question the right he hath of access unto his majesty by Jesus Christ? who shed his blood for the redemption of all, and therefore will act for him by virtue of that blood as well as for other men. For which reason also (as St. Chrysostom and his followers gloss upon the words[f]) we ought to recommend every one of them to God; for did he die for all, and will not thou do so much as pray for all? That is very uncharitable, and therefore do not suspect any such unkindness or partiality in him as thou oughtest not to be guilty of thyself. That is, do not think he will not make intercession for all that come to God by him, when he bids thee pray and give thanks for all men.

This I take to be the evident scope of these words of St. Paul to Timothy; which demonstrate there can be no mediator between God and us, but only our blessed Saviour, because he alone is qualified (as you shall see more fully before I have done) to be our Mediator, and so qualified as to put us out of all fear that he will be our Mediator with God.

[e] Dr. Jackson, book xi. chap. 46. [vol. xi. p. 366.]

[f] Œcumenius, Theophylact.

Therefore all the distinctions about a most perfect mediator and less perfect, independent and dependent, supreme and subordinate, are all frivolous and vain. For the apostle's discourse tends to prove that there is no other mediator whatsoever between God and us, but one alone, *Christ Jesus, who is our only Mediator and Advocate*, because he is our only Saviour and Redeemer, and the only person of whose kindness we can be assured equally and impartially unto all.

II.

Now as this is here plainly asserted, so the contrary notion is elsewhere utterly condemned, as I take it to be in the 1 Corinth. viii. 5, 6; unto which place St. Chrysostom refers us in his exposition upon the former words to Timothy: *For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; as there be gods many, and lords many: but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him:* where St. Paul not only teaches Christians to own one only Lord, but shows that it is a paganish error to acknowledge more, and, now the gospel is revealed, is antichristian. For the plain sense of the apostle in these words is, that the Gentile world indeed worshipped gods of several ranks, some higher, and other inferior deities; and addressed their services also to other heavenly powers, whom the language of the eastern countries called *Baalim*[e], 'lords' and *shedim;* which (if a learned man be not deceived in his conjecture[f]) is of the same import, from a Syrian word signifying 'rulers and governors;' who having, in their opinion, the administration of human affairs, they applied themselves unto them as agents and mediators for them to the highest: and there were many of both sorts, whom they reputed *gods* and *lords*. But we Christians acknowledge no more but one only true God, *the Father, of whom are all things;* that is, the Creator of all, from whom we had our being, and on whom we and all things else depend; unto whom therefore we ought to address all our services, and make our application to him alone, (which is the meaning of *and we by* or *for him.*) And one only Lord, our sole Mediator with God, Jesus Christ, by whom the whole

[e] Mr. Mede, p. 774–6. [p. 626. ed. 3. fol. Lond. 1672.] [f] Lud. de Dieu in S. Matth. ix. 32. [p. 33.]

world was created, and all good things still communicated unto us from the Father of all, through his hands alone; and therefore we by him ought to offer up all our prayers, praises and thanksgivings to the Most High, and hope to find access unto his majesty through him alone.

This evidently shows it is an heathenish notion to imagine more lords or mediators, (for that was the quality of their *Baalim*,) who have power with God to do us good, (for whose sake i. e. we hope to prevail with God, and by whom we expect to receive blessings from him,) than our Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is the only person *by whom are all things, and we by him.* "Every country, every city, nay, almost every family had their several gods and godlings" (as one of our own divines speaks[f]) in the days of ignorance and darkness; but now that we are illuminated with the clear and full knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, there are no more mediators than there are gods; one God, and one Lord, who is the only begotten Son of God.

This is the religion of Christians, who if they either hope to receive grace from him that alone can give it, or would give glory and honour unto him that alone ought to have it, they must believe that this is he and he alone, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;* who will be invoked by no other name, but only by the name of his Son, for whose sake, and whose alone, he will accept us, and grant our requests.

This I take to be so certain, that we may conclude, from these words of St. Paul, it was the very intention and design of God in the Christian religion therefore to appoint one only Lord, the only begotten Son of God, to be our intercessor with the Most High; that the world might be taken quite off from all dependence upon other mediators, by whom they had been wont to make their addresses, and upon that account gave them that honour and service which was due to God alone. Unto which kind of worship if we return, by having recourse to any other mediators with God the Father to obtain his favour for us, but only our Lord Jesus Christ, it is apparently to set up again that way of religion which our Lord Christ, the eternal Son of God, came to destroy and utterly abolish. It is a manifest apostasy (so far) from Christianity,

[f] Dr. Sanderson. [Serm. xiii. ad Aulam, Works, vol. i. p. 341.]

the very purpose of which is defeated, if other mediators be allowed together with him, whom God enthroned on purpose that he might put down all pretenders whatsoever to this high office, for which none is fit but himself alone. As will appear in the following part of this discourse concerning the reasons which demonstrate none to be qualified to be our Mediator with God, but only our Lord Jesus Christ.

III.

I. The principal of which reasons is this, that he alone partakes of both our natures, the nature of God and the nature of man. By which means he is absolutely qualified so as no other person is, or can be, to be the Mediator between God and man. For when we consider the infiniteness of the Divine Majesty, we cannot conceive any proper Mediator with him but one equal to him. But what encouragement could we have had from such a Mediator? who being no less infinite in his majesty, and no nearer to us, might as much deter our approaches to him, as if we came immediately unto God the Father himself; whose almighty goodness therefore wonderfully contrived that the Son of God, equal to the Father, should become a man; that so we might not fear to draw nigh to him, nor doubt of acceptance by his means, either for want of any interest in God the Father, or for want of tenderness and affection towards us, the children of men, who are miserable sinners.

This is a most astonishing mystery, wherein we must humbly and thankfully acknowledge God hath infinitely condescended unto us; who are not sufficiently sensible of it, if we imagine any inferior person is fit to perform this glorious office for us, of recommending us and our requests to the favour of God.

Unto which office the ancient Christians could not conceive how any mere creature could be fit to be admitted, until he was advanced into a personal union with the Godhead. For with one mouth [g] they interpret the *man Christ Jesus* (who St. Paul says is our *one Mediator*) to signify as much as *God-man*, or *God incarnate*, whom he names *man* (saith Theodoret upon these words) because he calls him *Mediator*, for he *mediated* by being made man. And from this very thing he confutes Arius and Eunomius, who said Christ did not partake of the

[g] Epiphan. in Ancorato, [§ 44. tom. ii. p. 49 D.] Athanas. Dial. v. de S. Trinit. [tom. ii. p. 532.] Theodoret. Dialog. 2. [tom. iv. p. 85.] Œcumen. in loc. [tom. ii. p. 219.] &c.

nature of the Father; for then, said he, how is he a Mediator; unless as he is ὁμοούσιος, 'of one substance' with us in his humanity, so he be with the Father in his Divinity? which is an evident proof there can be but one administrator of our peace, as his words are; even he who hath knit together in himself the most distant things. Just as he who is desirous to reconcile two persons that quarrel one with another comes between them, and taking one of them by the right hand, and the other by the left, makes them friends, and joins them together in a happy agreement: even so did our Saviour, by uniting the human nature to the divine, procure a sincere and everlasting peace. Thus he and St. Chrysostom, to whom others more ancient might be added. And that they speak not this with respect to his redeeming us only, but to his interceding for us also, appears from this, that they cannot be separated, he interceding for us in the right of his redemption, (as you have heard in part, and shall hear more presently,) and from this famous passage in St. Austin's Confessions l. x. c. 42, 43[h]; "Whom shall I seek after to reconcile me to thee? Shall I go to the angels? By what prayer, by what sacraments? Many endeavouring to return to thee, and not being able by themselves, have (as I hear) tried these, and fallen into a desire of curious visions, and been worthy to be deluded, &c." The mediator between God and man ought to have something like to God, and something like to man; lest being in both like to man, he should be too far from God; or in both like to God, he should be too far from man, and so not be a mediator, &c. And well might the Divine Majesty be so offended as to suffer those to be deluded who adventured to make addresses to angels for their assistance, after the revelation he made of his good will unto men by Christ in so condescending a manner as hath been related. For he is jealous lest that honour which belongs to him alone should be communicated to any other, and for that very reason provided, by the great mystery of the incarnation, that, without provoking him to jealousy, we might address ourselves unto one in his very presence as our Mediator, to act as an agent between him and us; even unto our Lord Jesus Christ, who, as I have often said, is completely fitted to do us this kindness, and he alone, because as God he

[h] [Tom. i. coll. 193, 194.]

best knows the nature and quality of every offence against the Divine Majesty, what the deserts of it are, what punishments are in justice due to it, and also of what mercy and mitigation it is capable, and what dispositions there are in the hearts of those who sue for mercy to make them capable of it; and as man he knows all our infirmities and temptations, our needs and sufferings, not by information from others, but by his own experience, which disposes him to pity us, and to be the more ready to sue out a pardon, and to procure our deliverance from those punishments we deserve, the heaviness of which he himself, and he alone, best knows, by what he felt in his bitter agony and passion for our sakes, the very oppression of which made him *sweat as it were drops of blood*, and be *heavy and sorrowful even unto death.*

I have used some of the words of an excellent divine of our own church, and I do not see but they have reason, who humbly conceive, as he did[h], that while our Lord was only the Son of God, (before his incarnation,) all the vengeance that men's sins deserved was not executed at his intercession, though men could not think of requesting him to intercede for them. The saints then did nothing for men, as they of the Roman church confess, and it was the error of the Gentiles to think that angels were interpreters between God and men. Now our Lord, by taking our flesh upon him, and becoming the Son of man, hath not altered the case; the intention of that not being to make his divine nature more favourable, or that his access to God the Father might be more free, but that we might approach unto him with greater boldness and assurance of immediate audience, than we could have before this wonderful mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God was made known to us.

Upon which account it would be a great sin to apply ourselves to any other intercessors, as if we distrusted his tenderness, who, having taken our flesh, exposed it on purpose to greater indignities and sorrows than any man in this life can have experience of, that he might be a more compassionate intercessor for us to God the Father than any saint or angel can be; unto whom if men had any reason to resort, it should have been before Christ's incarnation, when they knew so little of the Son of God. But then there was no such thing allowed;

[h] Dr. Jackson's Orig. of Unbelief, sect. iv. c. 24. [Commentaries on the Creed, book v. chap. 24. vol. iv. p. 219.]

he was then our sole Mediator with God, and therefore is so much more now, when, having submitted himself to be a man, he hath done and undergone all that can be, to complete himself for this office between God and us.

The sum of this particular is, that the mystery of God incarnate forbids us to address ourselves unto any other mediator but Jesus Christ, both because it is unsafe to prostrate ourselves before any mere creature in the divine presence, which provokes the Most High to jealousy, and because no mere creature is great enough to interpose between us, to procure us a gracious acceptance with his Majesty. For if there were, we cannot see why the Son of God should have humbled himself so much as to become a man.

II. But it is further to be distinctly considered, that having taken our nature, he alone died for us, and upon that account is our alone Intercessor with God the Father. For here it must be carefully observed, that our Lord was not presently installed into this glorious office as soon as he had taken our nature upon him, but he was advanced unto it by the means of his suffering death, even the death of the cross; whereby he both paid the price of our redemption, and made a purchase to himself of this unparalleled preferment, to be exalted to sit on the right hand of God, there to make intercession for us. And here more considerations than one present themselves to prove that he alone can discharge this office. But that which I shall particularly consider is only this, that he alone deserved this glorious preferment by his meritorious death and passion, in obedience to his Father's will; by virtue of which meritorious passion he intercedes with God for us, and pleads it in our behalf. For there is nothing plainer in the holy Scriptures than this, that the intercession of Christ is his continued oblation of himself for us in the heavens. Whence it is that in Heb. ix. 24, 25, &c., these two expressions, *to appear in the presence of God for us*, that is, intercede with him, and *to offer himself to God*, are used by the apostle, as hath been elsewhere observed[i], for one and the same thing under different considerations: they both have respect to his sacrifice; but the first of them to his sacrifice as continued, the other to his sacrifice as begun: setting this difference aside, there is no other

[i] [Sermon of One Sacrifice.]

between them; that offering himself as a sacrifice for us being the beginning of his intercession, and his intercession, or appearing in God's presence for us, being his continued oblation.

And therefore, as none offered sacrifice for our sins, much less offered himself a sacrifice for us, but he alone, so none else can intercede for us, because it is in the virtue of this sacrifice that he intercedes, and appears as one sacrificed in the presence of God for us, thereby procuring divine blessings to us, as the fruit of that his continued sacrifice in the heavens.

In short, it hath been proved in a foregoing sermon, that there is but one Priest or Saviour of the New Testament, which is Christ himself, part of whose office it is to intercede by the virtue of the sacrifice which he began and offered but once upon the cross, but completed and finished by his intercession, in virtue of the same sacrifice which lasts for ever in heaven.

To go then to any other intercessor is in effect to make void the sacrifice of Christ, which he needed not have offered if there can be any intercession without a sacrifice: and what an indignity is this to the highest love which he expressed in giving himself a sacrifice to God for us! It is to commit a crime of the highest ingratitude to him, who intended by this to oblige us eternally unto him, as an all-sufficient and our only Saviour and Redeemer.

III. And indeed he alone is in the most holy place, (as appears from what hath been said,) his advancement thither being the fruit of his deep humiliation to the death of the cross for our sake; for which cause *God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,* as the apostle discourses in Philipp. ii. 9, 10, 11. With which let the reader join a few places more and seriously peruse them, particularly Heb. i. 3; ii. 9, 10, and x. 12, and he will be satisfied that his enthroning at God's right hand was the reward of his obedient sufferings, which being peculiar to himself, so is the privilege granted thereupon: that is, none but he our great High Priest can come into the holy place, there to appear before God for us; which is the reason that our asking in his name is frequently made the fruit of his as-

cension into heaven, even by his own words before he went thither. Read John xiv. 12, 13, and xvi. 26, as well as this verse of which I am treating, which begins thus, *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing*, &c.; where, and in verse 26, these words, *in that day* and *at that day*, are to be remarked, because they show us how his name became so powerful when mentioned in our prayers, viz. by his going unto the Father, and being with him in his heavenly habitation, where his faithful disciples may be confident he undertakes their cause, and will do for them according to their desires. And accordingly the apostle makes his eternal intercession for us to depend upon his being *higher than the heavens*[k], which shows, as I said in the beginning, that to ask in his name is as much as to ask in his name alone, because none can approach to the Divine Majesty as an intercessor to him but our Lord alone, who *by his own blood entered in once into the holy place*[l]. For there is none else admitted in the holy place where intercession is to be made but only he himself. The angels, as great as they are, stand at a distance, being but ministers of God, who are ready to despatch his orders according to the direction of our great High Priest, unto whom they are all made subject.

IV. And upon this score he is said to be our *Advocate with the Father*, and must be understood to be our sole Advocate, both because he alone (as hath been now said) is with the Father, and because he therefore is our Advocate with the Father, because he is our Priest who sacrificed for us, which no saint or angel ever did, much less sacrificed themselves to God a propitiation for our sins. That is proper to him alone, and therefore so is the patronage that we expect from an advocate, which he alone can give us.

This is a matter which deserves to be a little particularly explained. Now an advocate, in the proper notion of the word, is such a person as a man calls in to his assistance when he hath a cause depending, to plead it for him before a judge better than he can do it himself. That is, first to present his suits and desires to the judge, and then to clear the justice or show the equity of those desires, that so the judge may be persuaded by these or any other good endeavours, to favour his client's suits and interests, notwithstanding any thing that can be said

[k] Heb. vii. 26. [l] ix. 12.

to the contrary by the other side who oppose him. Such an advocate is Christ, who recommends both us and our suits unto God by all such means and arguments as may render them efficacious on our behalf, notwithstanding any thing that may be objected against us by our grand adversary, from the demerit of our manifold offences.

And as this is the business of an advocate, so our blessed Lord is said to be an *Advocate with the Father*, because he is not only in the heavens, but before the very throne of God, there to represent our suits and obtain favour for us; which he doth with authority by the virtue of his precious blood, whereby he propitiates his heavenly Father and moves him to be gracious to us.

For so St. John teaches us that his advocation is in conjunction with his propitiation: *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins*, &c.[m] He not only was, but still is our propitiation, because by his sacrifice he appears in God's presence for us, (as an advocate doth for his client before the judge,) to render him propitious to us, having made atonement by his precious blood, wherewith he pleads for us. Now all this plainly shows he is our only Mediator and Advocate with the Father; for what hath now been so presented can be said of no other person but himself alone. And therefore, to apply ourselves to God by any other as our patrons with him, and to desire them to undertake our cause, especially to desire God for their sakes to grant our requests, is an open infringement of the sole prerogative of our Lord Jesus Christ; unto whom this alone belongs in so uncommunicable a manner, that none can be promoted unto it without a manifest invasion of his office. For God not only on purpose advanced him unto it, that we might not want one to recommend us to him, but gave him such an authority in the heavens as none else hath, that we might never think of desiring any other to recommend us unto God, who hath commanded us all to come unto him by Christ. In an evident allusion unto clients, who, not being able to manage their cause themselves, make their addresses and speak to the judge by their advocate, who undertakes their patronage, as Christ doth ours, with such a prevailing authority as none other can exer-

[m] 1 John ii. 1, 2.

cise. For he is appointed by God himself unto this office, in which also I have shown he is infeoffed (as Mr. Mede significantly speaks) by his inimitable death and passion, and by his triumphant resurrection from the dead, and his glorious ascension to the throne of God, where he alone can manage this office, by virtue of the same immediate death and passion, for our sake.

There are many vain endeavours used by those of the Roman church to avoid the dint of this argument, by pretending particularly that they do not go to God immediately by any other mediators and advocates, but only by Jesus Christ, through the intercession of saints and angels.

Which is a most lamentable shift, being manifestly convicted of untruth by the public offices wherein they address themselves immediately to God by them, desiring him to hear their prayers and grant them pardon and grace, &c., at the intercession of the saints, and for the sake of their merits. This is not a place to produce particular instances of such prayers, which the reader may find truly reported by many of our writers, and observe withal that they conclude indeed those prayers with these words, "by and through our Lord Jesus Christ." But as this is a monstrous absurdity, (just as if one should desire his sovereign to grant his petition for the meritorious services, and at the instance of such and such great courtiers, by his son the prince, which would be looked upon as ridiculous,) so it plainly shows their addresses are not made immediately through our Lord Christ, but they desire God the Father to be gracious to them immediately for the sake of the saints, and bring in the Lord Jesus in the conclusion only as a supplement to the saints' merits.

Nay, more than this, they desire in several prayers that the oblation which they make of Jesus Christ himself, God's eternal Son, (as they take the sacrifice of the mass to be,) may be acceptable to God by the intercession and the merits of the saints[n].

Which is not barely to advance them to be joint intercessors with him, and an open invasion of his prerogative royal, in thrusting others into his office together with him, but a manifest degrading or deposing him from his throne, and putting others into it; by whom he himself must be commended unto

[n] See, among other instances, Domitillæ, et Pancratii, in Mens. Missale in festo Nerei, Achillei, Maii.

God, and find acceptance with him, and profit those that receive him.

V. But to show that as there is but one God in heaven, and no other God subordinate unto him, so there is but one Mediator there, and no subordinate mediators by whom we must come unto him: let it be further considered, that to suppose the need of any inferior sort of mediators unto this one supreme Mediator, (which is the very best the Roman church can make of their practice,) is, in truth, to destroy the very notion of Christ's mediatorship between God and us. For it makes him to be as distant from us as God the Father himself, and not to have sufficiently condescended to our weakness in becoming a man, and in dying for us; but to be still so far from us, and above us, that we must not presume to approach him without the favour of some other person to introduce us into his glorious presence.

This is the plain meaning of such a number of mediators to him as are now solicited by the prayers of the Roman church; of which there can be no need if he be indeed *of our flesh and of our bone,* and own us for his brethren; and be ready and desirous to undertake our patronage; and be also appointed thereunto by God on purpose that we might not doubt. He who loved us so much, as after he had taken our nature upon him to submit himself willingly to die for us, would as willingly, upon our humble addresses to him, recommend us and our request to God, because *he liveth ever to make intercession for them that come to God by him*[o]. Observe that this is his very office, which he cannot but be inclined to discharge without the importunities of any other persons to put him in mind of it. And observe again, if we must trouble ourselves to desire the saints to intercede for us to Christ, then he is not so properly our Mediator as theirs, and we do not come to God by him, but by them, who came to God by him.

And, indeed, those very places of Scripture whereby the Romanists[p] themselves prove that the saints are not immediate intercessors with God for us, (but whatsoever they obtain for us, they obtain it by Christ,) are some of them so pregnant that they directly overthrow all secondary mediators, or mediate intercessors (as they distinguish) with Christ to him.

[o] Heb. vii. 25. [p] Bellarmin. de Sanct. Beat. l. i. c. 17. propos. 2. [Opp. tom. ii. col. 737.]

For example, *It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell*[q]. If all fulness, then the fulness of mediation or intercession dwells in him, as a great man[r] of our own church, I think, most reasonably argued. Again, from the place before alleged, *there is one God and one Mediator*[s], we may safely conclude, if there be no secondary gods, there are no secondary mediators. And John x. 7, 9, our Lord calls himself *the door*, and John xiv. 6, *the way;* and such a *door* and such a *way* as *no man cometh to the Father but by him*, which restriction proves him to be the only door and the only way, and therefore we have nothing to do either with angels or saints in this matter. For if we come to God by them, we must pass through other doors that we may come to this only immediate door; and take other ways that we may get to him the only immediate way: which is as much as to say that he is the only door by which the saints come to God, but we must go through other doors, the saints being necessary doors for our admittance to him. We must have mediators to the Mediator. A piece of divinity borrowed from St. Bernard, but directly contrary even to common reason. For if Christ be our immediate mediator, (as they say he is) then he hath an immediate reference unto the two parties between whom he is Mediator; which he is not between God and us, unless we have an immediate access unto him, as he hath unto God; and that we have not, if we must make use of mediators to him, and not come directly by him to the Father. But besides all this, there is no mere creature in heaven or in earth that can with any reason be thought capable to discharge this vast office; for who but he alone can be supposed able to hear all men's prayers every where, to attend unto all their supplications, which are very various at the same moment, and both to comprehend all their suits in his mind, and to judge what are fit to be presented, and what not? This one thing alone excludes all others from this office: for could we suppose his mother or any other saint to hear all requests, (which is not to be conceived,) yet we are sure they dare not recommend the suits of any to God but of sincere persons. Now there is no means for them to be assured of men's sincerity, unless we suppose them to be the searchers of

[q] Coloss. i. 19.

[r] Dr. Jackson, Orig. of Unbelief, sect. 4. chap. 24. [Commentaries on the Creed, book v. chap. 24. vol. iv. p. 218.]

[s] 1 Tim. ii. 5.

the heart, which is proper to God our Saviour alone, who saith, *I am he which searcheth the reins and the heart,* and upon that account knows how to *give unto every one of us according to our works*[t].

VI. And what authority have either angels or saints in heaven; what power to dispose of any thing? Intercede they may at large, and so are we on earth commanded to make intercession[u]; but these prayers of ours and of the saints for other persons are of a quite different nature from the intercession of a mediator and advocate with God the Father, which Christ alone is for us all; for the prayers of all mere creatures are no more than humble supplications, but the intercession of which we stand in need is a powerful recommendation of us and of all our prayers and supplications with such an authority as will certainly prevail: such an intercession belongs unto our Lord alone, by virtue (as I have often said) of the propitiatory sacrifice which he alone offered for us. They petition as subjects to their prince; but he recommends as one prince doth to another, in whom he hath a prevailing interest upon the account of his incomparable merits.

By these he pleads for us; but saints and angels have nothing to plead in our behalf which can challenge an audience. This is his peculiar honour, who, as he alone hath authority enough with God the Father, so alone hath compassion enough to concern himself for us all. The very saints themselves need to be recommended by him; and have nothing of their own to plead, but depend as we do upon their own authority in the court of heaven.

Where he alone hath power to give whatsoever he desires of God, being a King (you have heard) as well as a Priest. And therefore, as he here saith, *whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, he will give it you,* so in another place of this Gospel he saith he himself will do it; *Whatsoever ye ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*[x]; which he repeats again, ver. 14, *If you ask any thing in my name, I will do it.* For he hath all power in heaven and in earth, as he told his apostles before he went to heaven, whereby he can effect his own desires, and make good all his promises, and command the angels (without any suits of ours

[t] Rev. ii. 23. [u] 1 Tim. ii. 1. [x] John xiv. 13.

to them) to attend our service, which is their proper business, to listen, not to our prayers, but to his commands, which he issues forth for the service of his clients.

VII. And therefore it is very considerable that we never meet with one word of advice or encouragement (much less of command) to use the intercession of any other person but only his, in whose name we are expressly and frequently required to address ourselves to the Divine Majesty, not only here, John xviii. 23, 24, where there is a promise also of an acceptance, but in other places, where we find the same, and are invited thereupon to come with confidence, particularly John xiv. 13, 14, the place just now mentioned, and John xiv. 16, *I have chosen you and ordained you to go and bring forth fruit,* &c., that *whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.* Of which we may be confident, because we are sure of the power of his intercession[z], and of the value of his merits and satisfaction which give him such power[a]; and that it is his office to intercede for us[b], and that he hath perfect knowledge of all our affairs, both of our outward state and condition, and of our inward qualities and dispositions[c]: all things being naked and open to the eyes of him who is our great High Priest, passed into the heavens, where we are sure also he hath power to help us and hath promised he will, (as was said before,) and that his compassion is greater towards us, infinitely greater than the pity of any creature can be, because he is the *good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep*[d]. Finally, he intercedes, we are certain, as a Son with his Father, as an obedient Son with a most gracious Father, as a Son whose obedience was tried in no ordinary service, but in suffering the death of the cross, by which obedience he hath obtained the highest power to relieve us, and is disposed by the same sufferings to be most ready to do it, having been *tempted in all points like as we are*[e].

Upon all which accounts it is that the apostles say expressly, *we have access to God by him*[f], and that our spiritual sacrifices are *acceptable to God by him*[g]. And that it is so far from

[z] Heb. vii. 25.
[a] 1 John ii. 1, 2.
[b] Rom. viii. 34.
[c] Heb. iv. 13, 14.
[d] John x. 2, 11; xv. 13.
[e] Heb. iv. 15.
[f] Rom. v. 2.
[g] Heb. xiii. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 5.

being a presumption to come to God by him without any other Mediator, that, quite contrary, they tell us, *we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him*[e], and give us this general rule, that *whatsoever we do in word or deed, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*[f]. Which is sufficient to make one wonder that any Christians who know these things should have so much as a thought enter into their minds of doing any thing in any other name, especially of presenting their prayers by any other person; since we have all this evidence that this is not only a sure and certain way of prevailing, but the alone sure and certain way, the only way to which we are directed, the only way wherein we can have any confidence, because there is no promise of acceptance by any other intercessor.

For to all this let one observation more be added, that this is the very reason of that name or title whereby God is peculiarly represented in the New Testament, viz. *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*[g]. In the old covenant his style was, *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob.* But now it is quite otherways; the denomination is no longer taken from the persons redeemed by God, (as it was heretofore from those great saints who were indeed the faithful and beloved servants of God,) but from the Redeemer himself, the Lord Jesus, who is the only begotten Son of God, for whose sake alone he will accept us and be gracious unto us.

And if we should lay all this aside, yet it would be very unsafe to trust to any other intercessor, if there were no more reasons for it but this, that we can have no certainty of faith that either angel or saint is appointed by God to do us this kind office, or that they have power, as I said, or interest enough to serve us, or can so much as hear us. But rather, we have the greatest reason to think they are every way as defective and unqualified for this illustrious office, as he is in all things completed and fitted for it, being, as you have heard, God-man, *our great High Priest, Jesus Christ the righteous;* who *purged away our sins by himself,* who is the *propitiation for our sins;* who was *in all points tempted as we are, only without sin;* who now *appears in God's presence for us, being*

[e] Ephes. iii. 12. [f] Coloss. iii. 17.
[g] Rom. xv. 6; 2 Cor. xi. 31; Ephes. iii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 3.

entered into the holy place with his blood, where he lives for ever to make intercession as our High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on high. None of which can be said of any angel or saint; who are not so much as priests, much less high priests, to appear in the presence of God for us.

For to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou at my right hand? No, they stand before his Majesty, and behold his face, as servants do who look to observe what their masters will command them, being all *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

VIII. It is therefore a disparagement both to our Lord Jesus Christ, and unto God the Father Almighty, and unto ourselves, to make addresses unto any but him alone, as our Advocate, Mediator and Intercessor with God the Father.

1. A disparagement to our Lord Jesus Christ it is most manifestly, because it represents him as if he had not affection and tenderness enough for us from his own inclination, but must be moved by others to be kind to us; directly contrary to the scope of the gospel, which tells us he loved us so much as of his own accord to lay down his life for us, and as contrary to his most serious professions of love to us, his most solemn entreaties that we would come to God by him, and his frequent solemn assurances that he will obtain audience for us.

2. And to apply ourselves to any other mediator of any sort, is no less than an affront to the majesty of God the Father Almighty; representing him who is almighty love, as if he were (though not utterly inexorable, yet) so hard to be entreated, that we must use nobody knows how many intercessors to him for his favour. This is so contrary that nothing can be more to the notion that Christ hath given us of him; which is, that he is inclinable of himself, even without his intercession, to be favourable to us; (and therefore much more without the intercession of others;) his love towards Christ's disciples being so great, that our Lord would have them rely more upon that than upon his own intercession in their behalf. For in comparison with the love of God the Father, he saith he would not so much as mention what he would do for them, as their Advocate in the heavens. Thus we read, ver. 26 of this chapter, *At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father*

himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, &c. Where we are taught that we ought indeed to depend upon our Saviour's intercession for us, now that he is in heaven, but not so as to distrust the kindness of our heavenly Father towards us, who hath appointed us to make use of the name of his Son in our addresses to him; not because he would discourage our confidence in himself, but only to make and keep us humble, and to work in us a sense of our own unworthiness; which we must never forget when we have the highest thoughts of his infinite goodness. Which assures us that he loves us upon the account of his own inclination, as well as upon the account of being recommended by Christ's intercession into his favour, which recommendation of us by Christ must needs therefore be effectual without any other; not only because it is made by him whom God always hears, but because it is made for them whom God dearly loves of his own accord.

3. It is therefore even upon this account a more dishonourable thing for us, who are thus highly favoured and beloved by God, as well as by his Son Jesus Christ, to go to any other, either saint or angel, to beg their recommendations, and entreat for their sake the acceptance of our prayers, which are directed to God's infinite love in the name of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Saviour and Redeemer Christ Jesus, who having procured us this high privilege of addressing unto God only by him, (which God the Father hath graciously indulged to us, and assured us withal there needs no more, he himself being inclinable to favour us, even without the intercession of his Son,) it is below the dignity of a Christian to crouch to his fellow-servants, and debase himself before them as their supplicant; whereby he declares himself unworthy of the great honour that is done him, of approaching, as Origen speaks, unto the Most High by his eternal Word.

Would to God these few plain truths were seriously considered; what a disrespect this way of praying by the mediation of saints and angels is to our blessed Lord and Saviour, what a distrust of him and of his merits, who redeemed us by his precious blood; as if his *Verily verily* carried no certainty at all in it, nor could be safely relied on as an assurance we shall prevail in his name!

What a disparagement also this is to the transcendent love

of God the Father, who assures us he loves them so tenderly who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, that he is ready of himself to grant their requests.

And therefore how much we degrade ourselves, and forget our *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, by going a begging to others for their favour, as if we were their servants, when we are all the children of God, and of the same family with the saints themselves. And then we should withal see what a folly it is to trouble ourselves to use any other interest but that of our blessed Saviour, especially when we have the highest assurance given us that we shall have whatsoever we ask in his name.

APPLICATION.

And here now I must remember you, for a conclusion of this discourse, that it supposes it to be our duty to address ourselves continually in humble prayer to God, and then to make those prayers in the prevailing name of the Lord Jesus.

If we desire and hope for any advantage by the powerful intercession of the Son of God, we must take care of these two things: first, to ask of God the Father whatsoever we need; and, secondly, to ask those things of him in the name of Christ. For as the apostle speaks, *He is able to save them to the uttermost who come to God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them*, but then they must come to God, and likewise they must come *by him*.

For the former of these, we must consider that Christ makes not intercession for those who make no prayers to God for themselves. For if the main business of his intercession be as you have seen the Scripture represents it, a recommendation of us and of our suits to God, it is not to be understood how he should intercede for them who offer him nothing to be recommended by him. There can be no use of a priest where there is no kind of sacrifice, no use of an advocate where there is no client: all that he can do for such negligent people, is to move for grace to stir them up to a sense of piety towards God, and to awaken them to attend to their own good, which is not the proper intercession so much spoken of in the holy Scriptures, but a lower thing, supposing us still to be unacceptable unto God. If we would be otherways, we must previously set our-

selves to seek God's favour, as he hath directed us; and till we do this, he hath nothing to offer unto God from us, because we present no sacrifice of prayer or thanksgiving to be offered by him.

Let them weigh this, who are so irreligious as to live in a perpetual neglect of the duty of prayer to God: and they also, who are so defective in religion, as never to draw nigh unto God in the holy eucharist, which is the peculiar Christian worship and service wherein we commemorate that sacrifice which our Lord pleads for us in the heavens. Such people do not at all concern themselves in the intercession of Christ, at God's right hand, and in all the admirable fruits and benefits which by that intercession he procures for men. Of which we cannot partake, but by our hearty acknowledgment of our Creator, and of our constant dependance upon him, and obligations to him; in our daily prayers and thanksgivings, with hearty devotion to him. Forasmuch as our prayers and praises, our holy and hearty desires, are the proper and most peculiar matter which Christ our great High Priest and Advocate recommends to God by his intercession.

But here we must take care of two things:

1. First, that our prayers be not cold.

2. Secondly, that they be not lame and imperfect.

For we ought to supplicate him with such strong cries and most ardent desires, as Christ himself we read offered unto God in the days of his flesh, that is in his bitter agony[g], which will be more especially expected from us when we have any great difficulties to wrestle withal, and are in apparent dangers. And in these prayers we must offer our very selves to God's faithful service, as Christ *gave up himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*

Thus the apostle beseeches all Christians in his Epistle to the Romans xii. 1, that they would be moved by the mercies, the tender mercies of God, *to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.* So reasonable, that without this, all our prayers are lame; and such sacrifices, you know, were never accepted by God, nor could be presented by the priest, as without the other they are

[g] Heb. v. 8.

careless, and we may be sure will not be regarded by our Saviour when we mind not what we say ourselves.

II.

But more than this, we must consider that even the best prayers and services we can offer unto God do not interest us in the intercession of Jesus Christ, unless we use him as our Advocate with the Father. That is the other part of our duty which I told you lies upon us. As we ought to ask, so we must ask in the name of Christ. As we must come to God, so we must come to God *by him;* that is, in the faithful use of his powerful mediation and intercession for us.

We must desire that all our prayers, and the devoting ourselves to God in holy obedience, may be acceptable to him, by his well-beloved Son. For though natural religion might be accepted while there was no law but that of nature, yet now that we are expressly required here to ask of God in Christ's name, now that we are required to offer up our sacrifices by him[h], and now those sacrifices become *acceptable to God by Christ Jesus*, (as St. Peter teaches us[i],) we must make our addresses to God by the mediation of this great High Priest, whom he hath appointed over his house and family, the church; that is, we must own the religion of the gospel, by offering our prayers, our thanksgivings, and ourselves, souls and bodies, unto God, in the name and through the mediation of his Son Christ Jesus, desiring they may be accepted upon his account.

For which there are such pregnant reasons, that we do not understand our religion if we be not sensible of the weight of them, and be not moved by them.

1. For first, this way of addressing to God is of great and necessary use to breed and preserve in us a due sense of the infinite greatness of the Divine Majesty, and to make us keep our distance from him, and maintain that reverence, fear, and awe of him, which this way of approaching him by an intercessor naturally teaches us, notwithstanding the belief we have of his incomparable love to us.

2. For, secondly, it manifestly tends to make us sensible of our meanness, and the meanness of all our services, which are of small value, but as they are recommended by one of greater merit. And so it begets and preserves in us the great virtue

[h] Heb. xiii. 15. [i] 1 Pet. ii. 5.

of humility, which is the foundation of all virtue, and most necessary to make our prayers and all we do acceptable.

3. And, lastly, this is but a fitting respect (as I may call it) to our blessed Lord and Saviour, who hath done and suffered so much for us, that we ought not to expect to receive any thing from God but by his means, who it is fit should have the honour of procuring and conferring all blessings we desire. This we declare when we pray in his name, which is nothing else but to represent unto the Divine Majesty his meritorious sufferings, as the very ground of our approaches to him, and of our hope to obtain what we ask by the power which our Lord hath in the heavens at his right hand. And this is the sense of the thanksgivings we offer in his name; whereby we acknowledge we are not worthy to receive any thing but only upon his account, who procures for us all the blessings which the Divine goodness bestows upon us, and through whom they are all conveyed unto us.

And therefore let us be sure to come to God by him, and in a humble sense of our own undeservings hope to have even the best services we can present him withal (either at the eucharist, or throughout the whole course of our life, in the faithful discharge of our several offices) made acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ our great High Priest, who can do that for us which we cannot for ourselves, and procure for us that acceptance of which we are utterly unworthy. Which, if you observe it, is the encouragement the apostle gives us in the place I have often mentioned[k], both to address ourselves to God, and to make our addresses upon the account of Christ's interest with him, because he is able to save, and *save to the uttermost all those who come to God by him* to obtain their salvation, that is, all the means or spiritual aids requisite for so great an end. There is no sin so great, but the hearty penitent may confidently hope for pardon of it by the intercession of this Advocate who is the propitiation for our sins.

No temptation, no passion so strong, but it may be overcome by the power of God's grace; and no grace needful but may be obtained of God by the intercession of our Saviour; through whom grace, mercy and peace is multiplied upon those who are sincerely devoted to him.

[k] Heb. vii. 25.

No duty so difficult but it may be performed by the assistance of the Divine power, and whatsoever power is necessary, we may procure it by ardent prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will *grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man* [l]. Yea, we may be made able by him to perform our duty with satisfaction and comfort in the midst of all difficulties. For we pray to the *Father of mercies and the God of all comfort*, who will *comfort us in all our tribulation;* and if the suffering of Christ abound in us, will make our *consolation also abound by Christ* [m].

In short, all things necessary for the support and increase of our spiritual life and vigour may be obtained by fervent prayer, through his recommendation who knows the strength of those temptations that assault us, and is acquainted with our weaknesses and infirmities under those temptations; and no less ready to intercede for seasonable supplies of constant spiritual aids, if we importunately ask them for the sake of him, to whom God will deny nothing.

To sum up all. It is one of the fruits of Christ's intercession that we have the knowledge of these things; which being communicated to us, together with the motions of his holy Spirit, to stir us up to make a good use of this heavenly knowledge, our business must be to devote ourselves sincerely to God in all the duties of a religious life.

For he cannot present their prayers to God who pray not for themselves, (that is impossible,) and he cannot present those prayers as acceptable to him, which are nothing but words, without affection and cordial resolution of faithful obedience; sacrifices, as the ancients speak, without a heart, which were never allowed in any religion.

Our religion requires us to offer up *spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*, (as St. Peter speaks) *by Christ Jesus*, who makes them acceptable by his recommendation, when we unfeignedly present them unto God. And those spiritual sacrifices are not merely our prayers and thanksgivings, but principally ourselves, as St. Paul informs us in the place forementioned [n]. And if we do in this manner present ourselves to God, Christ will make both this present, and all the prayers

[l] [Ephes. iii. 16.] [m] [2 Cor. i. 3–5.] [n] Rom. xii. 1.

and thanks which persons so well qualified and resolved in God's service shall offer unto him, to find grace and favour in his eyes by virtue of that great sacrifice which he offered once himself on the cross, and now presents to God in the heavens; as that which he hath already accepted by raising him from the dead, to sit at his own right hand, as our only Mediator and Advocate with him; to procure us all manner of blessings which we ask in his name, both now while we are here in this world, and hereafter when we depart from hence; and at the great day of the Lord Jesus, when he shall come to complete our salvation in eternal life and glory. Unto which since he alone can bring us, we ought not to apply ourselves unto any else but him, to conduct and lead and assist us in our way thither, particularly to help us to obtain audience for our prayers, which we make for mercy and grace, both now and in the day of Christ. To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, (according to the ancient doxology of the church, who never concluded with laud and praise to the blessed Virgin or any other saint, no more than prayed to them,) all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, be given in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

ONE SACRIFICE:

A SERMON

ON

HEBREWS X. 12.

[Now first printed from the original manuscript in the library of Lambeth Palace.]

IMPRIMATUR

Concio cui titulus ONE SACRIFICE.

Sept. 4, 1688.

Guil. Needham.

ONE SACRIFICE.

HEBREWS X. 12.

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.

THE scope of the holy writer of this Epistle being to persuade the Christian Hebrews to continue constant in their heavenly calling, (i. e. the Christian religion,) notwithstanding all the sufferings in body, goods, or fame, which they either had or were in danger to endure from its enemies, he represents to them the vast advantages they had by this religion, which that instituted by Moses could not afford them. Which advantages he derives from these two heads, that the *Apostle and the High Priest of our profession,* (as he calls our Saviour, chap. iii. 1,) do so far excel all the ministers of the law, that there is as wide a difference between the one and the other, as between the heavens and the earth. For first, as to the *Apostle of our profession,* or the *Author of our faith,* (as he speaks, xii. 1,) he is no less than the Son of God, a person not only greater than Moses and all the prophets, but than the angels themselves: as he demonstrates in the first chapter of this Epistle, and from thence infers the danger of forsaking him, as well as the benefit of adhering to him, in the second, third, and fourth chapters.

2. But there being nothing upon which the Hebrews more valued themselves and their religion than the priesthood, and the sacrifices thereupon depending, by virtue of which they were preserved in friendship with God, and held the good land which God had given them; the greatest part of the Epistle is spent in showing that the old priesthood and sacrifices were but mere figures and shadows, nay, not so much as perfect shadows and images of the Christian. *For we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,* as his

words are in the latter end of the fourth chapter. The very same person who was the Apostle became also the High Priest of our profession or religion; of whom not Aaron but Melchisedec (a greater high priest than Aaron, and ancienter than the law) was the type and figure, and by whom a sacrifice was offered to God, of such value, force, and efficacy, as not only eclipsed but utterly abolished and put an end to all those typical sacrifices under the law; having made such a perfect expiation thereby as all their priests and sacrifices for so many hundred years as had run out since Moses's time had not been able to accomplish.

This he begins to demonstrate in the fifth chapter, and with some other things intermixed continues unto my text. In which he draws to a conclusion of his discourse upon this subject, and is upon the point of making his inferences from it. For what can be added unto this, that *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, he for ever sat down on the right hand of God?*

Which words, if well considered, will suggest unto us most of those things wherein the preeminence of Christ's sacrifice consists; particularly these four:

First, that the sacrifice here mentioned which he offered for sins was *himself.*

Secondly, that his sacrifice was, like himself, but *one sacrifice.*

Thirdly, that as his sacrifice was but one, so it was but *once offered.* And

Lastly, that as he himself was both priest and sacrifice, so by this sacrifice he was consecrated to be both King and Priest.

I.

There is nothing more evident than the first of these, that by the *sacrifice* (here mentioned) which he *offered for sins* we are to understand the sacrifice of himself, his own body and blood, which were broken and shed for the expiation of our sins, that is, to obtain from God a pardon of them. That is the intention, we are sure, of *offering for sins,* which is expressed by several names of the same import in holy Scripture, which we translate *purging our sins, cleansing us from sin, redemption, making himself a ransom, a propitiation.* All which was done by *laying down his own life, and shedding*

his own blood, (as the very same Scriptures tell us,) *whereby we were reconciled to God,* and have received *the atonement* or *reconciliation,* are *justified* or *acquitted,* and have *remission or forgiveness of our sins;* which are different words for the same thing, all signifying the taking away the guilt of our sins; *so that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,* &c., *for he was made sin for us*[a], &c.; i. e. by his own consent was placed in our stead to bear the punishment of our sins; which were laid on him as the sins of the people of Israel were upon their sacrifices, which were offered to free them from the guilt of those sins for which their sacrifices were offered.

This free consent of his to be *made sin,* i. e. a sacrifice for sin, we read of in many places, which acquaint us both with his free and willing offering of himself to be such a bloody sacrifice, and also with his giving up his life by his actual dying for us, or shedding his blood for our expiation or cleansing. Of the first of these he himself speaks in most remarkable words: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*[b]; i. e. he voluntarily of his own accord, in obedience to his heavenly Father, offered himself to be a sacrifice, devoted himself to die, (in the time proper for it,) in confidence he should rise again and go as a priest with this sacrifice into the heavens, there (as you shall hear anon) to complete our redemption. Of the second, his actual dying as a sacrifice, the apostle speaks in the beginning of this Epistle, i. 3, *When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;* which is the very sense of my text, with an explanation of this part of it, what the sacrifice was which he offered for sins, which he saith was himself. And so he discourses more largely in the chapter before my text, ix. 11, 12, *Christ being come an high priest of good things to come,* &c. *neither by the blood of goats nor calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.* The same he repeats once before my text, when he saith, ver. 10, that *we*

[a] Hebr. i. 3; 1 John i. 7; Ephes. i. 7; Matt. xx. 28; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10; Rom. v. 9, 10, 11; Matt. xxvi. 28; Rom. viii. 1; 2 Cor. v. ult.

[b] John x. 17, 18.

are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

A truth of such importance, that the apostle thought he could not mention it too often, because herein mainly exists the excellency of Christ's sacrifice above all other, that he offered his own body which was slain for us. As much as to say, our great High Priest was himself our sacrifice.

These two very different things met in him who was both sacrifice and priest, which none ever was beside himself. He did not, as the Levitical priests, offer the blood of bulls and goats, neither did he offer up any other man, (as Abraham was about to offer up his son,) but he offered up himself, as the apostle speaks again in this Epistle, vii. 27 : *He needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people : for this he did once, when he offered up himself.* Which he inculcates once more, ix. 26, *In the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* He himself was *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world ;* the blood of atonement was no other but his own, which makes his sacrifice of far higher value and his priesthood of greater power and force than any other, as might be shown upon many accounts : but if we should deduce no more but this single advantage which he reaps from thence, it is of vast moment, and yields us incomparable comfort ; that he must needs be hereby rendered a priest far more tender and compassionately affected towards those for whom he offered, than Aaron or any other could be made by their sacrifices.

For though Aaron and his successors offered first for himself, as you just now heard, yet he did not offer himself ; but that was peculiar unto our great High Priest, Christ Jesus. If Aaron had suffered in the place of the beast which he offered, nay, if the sacrificing knife had but so much as rased his own throat, if his body had been gashed and wounded, if his own blood had been shed, though not unto death, he might have been made thereby a little more sensible than otherwise could be of the guilt and the misery of wretched people for whose sins he offered sacrifice. And all the time he had lain under the chirurgeon's hands for his cure, he might have been moved to put up the more ardent prayers for them by feeling the pain and dolours which their sins had cost him. But alas,

he suffered none of these things in his own person; he only beheld the struggling and heard the cries of the poor beast which he killed, without feeling the least harm himself; he only took the blood of other creatures, and with that went into the sanctuary made with men's hands, and therefore could be nothing so sensible as our great High Priest is of the condition of sinners, for whose transgressions he himself was bruised, cruelly crucified, and bled to the very death, *that by his stripes we might be healed.* As he went also to the cross he was in a dreadful agony, and felt such sore strugglings within himself, that they made him *sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.* Unto which was added also unheard of shame and reproach, nay, the vilest ignominy and contempt; whereas the person of Aaron and of his sons were always in high honour and esteem, and then most of all when they offered for the people's sins.

One great end of all which sufferings in his own person was, that he might be rendered thereby a more merciful and compassionate High Priest towards us miserable sinners, and that we might be assured he will intercede for us with the greater tenderness, and not fail to succour us in all our sufferings, and especially send his grace to enable us to strive against sin, and overcome it. As the apostle shows in the Epistle, chap. ii. ver. 18 and iv. 15, 16, which is a just reason why we should not depend upon nor use any intercessor with God but him alone, because he only is so qualified by his sufferings which he endured, as to be a fitting person to interpose on our behalf; being *tempted* or *tried in all points like as we are:* whereas the angels never suffered any thing, and the martyrs but a little; and therefore, in this regard, (as well as many other,) are not sufficiently qualified to perform this office for us, being never *tempted* or *tried in all points*, much less *without sin.*

Away therefore with all other mediators, even of intercession, besides this great High Priest alone, who, by offering himself, made an expiation for all sinners, and became so sensible thereby of their condition, that he is disposed with greater compassion than any one else can have, to make application of that expiation to every one of our souls. And so I come to the second particular, wherein the preeminence of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood consists, which is, that his sacrifice was like

himself, but one sacrifice, as he was but one priest, who had no successor in his offices.

Both these are fit to be distinctly considered.

First, that the sacrifice which he offered being himself, he therefore offered but one sacrifice, as my text tells us, whereby all manner of sins were expiated. Under the law there were many sacrifices offered for every guilty person, some for one sort of sin, and a different for another; every particular transgression and offence against the ordinances of Moses being to be expiated by a particular sacrifice. And that sacrifice which was sufficient for one crime was not sufficient for another; but there was to be a new sacrifice, and of a new kind also, as the law in that case directed. But Christ, saith the apostle in the next verse but one below my text, *by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

That is, all they that are devoted to the Lord Jesus by an obedient belief in him need take no more care for a sacrifice to procure remission for their sins; for his one sacrifice (being the sacrifice of himself) hath done more than millions of sacrifices under the law; being so all-sufficient, that it hath *perfected* or *completed* every such person for the Divine favour and acceptance; that is, it is able to procure them not only their pardon, but consummation of bliss and happiness, in that place where he himself is. The reason of which he gives in my text, because after he had *offered one sacrifice for sins, he for ever sat down at the right hand of God.* He was raised, that is, from the dead after he was slain; and not only so, but went with his blood into the heavens, and, more than that, remains there for evermore, and still more, sits at God's right hand in full power to do what he pleases for the perfecting of those whose sins he expiated by his blood; which he having shed, he had no more to do (as you shall hear presently) but to enter into his rest, and to enjoy the reward of his sufferings; which is such a sovereign almighty power, that he must needs be able, without any further pains, to perfect all his pious worshippers. The Priest, you see already, who sits at God's right hand obtained that dignity by making himself a sacrifice, which was so excellent, that there needed no more but that one sacrifice, either for himself or any else; the end for which it was offered being fully obtained, viz. remission of sin, and the eternal salvation of

those that obey him, together with grace to enable their obedience. Now the ground of all this, why this sacrifice was so excellent as to be but one, is in that which was said at first, viz. that it was the sacrifice of the priest's own body. And he was but one priest, as he was but one sacrifice; which the apostle takes special notice of, and therein pleads one prerogative of the Christian religion and priesthood above the Jewish; and therefore ought not to be passed by without our serious observation.

II.

As he offered but one sacrifice, so he is but one and the same Priest who continues alway in this office. Under the law there were a great number, as the apostle observes, vii. 23: *And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death;* that as there were many inferior priests at the same time, so the high priests were many also, one after another; because they being mortal, there must either be no priest at all, when one of them died, or upon his death another must immediately come into his place. *But this man,* (or this priest,) *because he continueth ever,* (mark that reason,) *hath an unchangeable priesthood,* without any succession or alteration; for it cannot pass to another, because he who enjoys it is immortal.

Which is a singular comfort to us many ways.

First, because we are hereby assured, that if he ever had compassion for any, he can have the same for us: or if ever we ourselves have found any benefit by his intercession, any life communicated to our souls, any help in danger, any strength against temptations, we may still confidently expect the like relief, because he is one and the same merciful High Priest, who, as the apostle argues in the very next words to those now named, concerning his unchangeable priesthood, *is therefore able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*

This assurance they wanted under the law of Moses, because, though one priest might be tender hearted, and very compassionate, yet another might arise when he was dead, that was not so good, nor of such a compassionate disposition as to be carefully concerned for their souls; and this was an imperfection which the Jews could never remedy: but our great High

Priest, continuing always without any alteration, being *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,* (as the apostle speaks, xiii. 8;) the same now that he hath ever been; the same that not only we, but all the people of God have ever had; we may be sure that he can and will take compassion upon us, and be gracious unto us, and do us good now and in all time to come, as much as he hath ever done: yea,

Secondly, he may be conceived rather to have more compassion than less, now in this age; having had the experience of all the distresses, miseries and afflictions of innumerable Christians of all sorts, for so many years as have passed since he went into the heavenly sanctuary; being acquainted with all the dangers that have happened to them, all the temptations that have assaulted them, all the conflicts they have endured for his name's sake. And it having been his constant practice to relieve, help, and save them, whereby much glory hath come unto him, and unto God the Father; and he keeping in remembrance also the fidelity and constancy of every pious Christian, which will not suffer us to doubt of his continued kindness to his church, or suggest any alteration in his affection, or abatement of his care about us; but rather make us confident that he is, upon all the forenamed accounts, more tenderly concerned for every one that sues unto God by him, and depends wholly upon his favour and grace, and the power he hath at God's right hand, which is so great, that he needs do no more than he hath already done to merit any thing of God for us.

III.

Which is the third thing, wherein I told you the excellency of Christ's sacrifice consists, that as it was but one, so it was but *once offered* for the sins of the world. For he being slain, and having shed his blood, and therein begun his sacrifice of himself for us, he was made alive again, that he himself might go, with that very blood which he had offered, into the most holy place, that is, into the heavens, there to perfect his sacrifice, or finish it for ever.

For this was necessary, every one knows, to the completing of the sacrifice of expiation; which was then perfected, when the blood was carried into the sanctuary, and there presented unto God, and accepted by him.

Now the blood of beasts which were sacrificed under the law was carried in by others into the earthly sanctuary, because it was a dead blood: but the blood of Christ being a living blood was carried by himself, after his resurrection from the dead, into the very presence of God, in that glorious place in the heavenly sanctuary, of which the other was but a shadow; and being carried thither, there he *lives for ever to make intercession for us;* being by his resurrection made an immortal High Priest, to die no more. For he went into the heavenly sanctuary to continue there, not to come out again till the end of all things; and therefore is said by his own blood to have *entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*[c]: that is, hath so perfectly done his work, that he need not come out to be sacrificed again, and to enter thither anew to obtain mercy for us.

This is another wide difference between his sacrifice and all others; that as there were many sacrifices under the law, of divers sorts, so every one of those sacrifices were often repeated upon fresh occasion: but his sacrifice, as it was but one, so it was but once offered, not needing to be repeated, because it continues in everlasting force. The reason of which lies in that which was said in the beginning of this discourse, that it was the offering of himself; who, though he died for sin, yet being made alive again dieth no more, but lives (as you shall hear more largely in its due place) for ever at the right hand of God.

Which the apostle takes notice of in many places of this Epistle, particularly in the place before named, vii. 27, *He needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, &c., for that he did once, when he offered up himself.* As much as to say, his one sacrifice continues its real efficacy to the end of the world, whereas those under the law had no virtue but only for the present, while they were offered, being upon new occasions to be repeated. The same he teaches in the ixth chapter, not only in the verse before mentioned, (ver. 12,) but again, ver. 26 and ver. 28, which I desire the reader to consult. My text also affirms as much, if we refer the word *for ever* not to the latter, but to the former part of the verse: *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat &c.* A sacrifice, that is, of everlasting force, to endure as

[c] Heb. ix. 12.

long as the world lasts, without any new sacrifice, or any new offering of this sacrifice. And so some ancient translations manifestly understand it, particularly the Ethiopic, which runs thus; *This man, having offered once for ever a sacrifice for sins, sat down &c.* But howsoever this be, the whole foregoing part of this chapter shows this to be the sense of the apostle. For having shown (ver. 1, 2, &c.) how imperfect the best sacrifices of the law were, by this argument, that they stood in need to be repeated year by year continually, he proceeds to set forth the perfection of Christ's sacrifice by this, that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all. Every priest indeed (under the legal dispensation) *stood ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which could never wipe away sins. But this priest, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God;* which is plainly to say, "that by his one oblation of himself once offered" (as our church paraphrases upon it in the Communion book) "he made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world;" so that there is no need, as of old, to *stand ministering, and offering oftentimes this same sacrifice* of Christ, *who by one offering* (ver. 14) *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

From whence we learn this comfortable truth, that Christ's blood which he offered was not only of infinite value, but also of infinite virtue: that it did not only procure an universal pardon for the sins of mankind, but the operation also of it continued throughout all ages, to work out a pardon for us. And there is as real a communication of the virtue still unto every one of our souls, as if it were but just now shed, provided we make good our part of the covenant of grace which he by his blood sealed and made of everlasting force. This is a convincing reason, as I shall show before I have done, why there neither needs, nor can be, any daily sacrifice made for the propitiating of God towards sinful men, as the Roman church now pretends. Let me only briefly point you out the true cause of this difference between Christ's sacrifice and all other, which was this:

Therefore the blood of beasts was of no longer force and power to expiate and take away sin but only when they were

offered, whereas the blood of Christ retains a never-ceasing virtue; because their blood was corrupted and perished, but his blood is incorruptible, and never dies. Unto which St. Peter seems to have respect when he saith, *We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish*[e].

Silver and gold, as one of our own divines observes, are less corruptible than the blood of beasts, for they do not so soon corrupt; yet they do at last decay and perish, being not of an enduring substance. And therefore the apostle would give us to understand by this comparison, that we are redeemed with a price as of far greater value, so of infinitely greater virtue too, because it shall always endure and never be corrupted. For whereas the blood of the old sacrifices was consumed, and did vanish, the blood of Christ, like to his body, *did not see corruption.* It was not spilt as water on the ground, which is not gathered up again, but preserved by the grace of God, and every drop of it made immortal in the heavens.

Which is the plain reason why he need not offer often; because the sacrifice he offered remains in perfect life and strength, and is so far from being lost, that it can never perish. But *as it is appointed unto all men once to die, so Christ was once offered,* that is, died as a sacrifice to God, *to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation,* not to die any more, (there is no need of that,) but to give life, *being made,* as that apostle elsewhere speaks, *a priest after the power of an endless life.* For by this sacrifice of himself once offered, he was consecrated to be an everlasting Priest in the heavens, for ever to execute the office of an high priest; which consisting in the offering of sacrifice for the expiating of men's guilt, it necessarily follows that his sacrifice which he offered for our expiation continues now in the same force and efficacy which it had when he died, and entered with it after his resurrection into the holy place in the heavens. For the explaining this the apostle uses two expressions, which signify one and the same thing, under different considerations: when he saith that *Christ now appears in the presence of God for us,* and that he *offered himself to God to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*[f]. The former

[e] 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

[f] Heb. ix. 24, 25, 26.

of which signifies the continuation of that which he began when he first entered into the holy place with his blood which he had shed for us. Then he presented his sacrifice unto God, (which was the last part of his sacrifice,) which he still continues to do by appearing (as one sacrificed) in the presence of God for us, that is, for the obtaining all that which his blood was shed to procure to us.

These are points of such exceeding great moment in our religion, that we ought to be the more careful to settle them in our minds, because all our comfort, all our security, our peace and hope depend upon the sacrifice of Christ, and his eternal priesthood. From whence flow the certainty of remission of sin, of the grace of God's holy Spirit, and of our eternal redemption, both in soul and body, from the power of hell and of the grave by the resurrection from the dead unto endless bliss.

For which reason we ought to be the more cautious, lest we fall into any mistakes about these matters, and beware of giving entertainment to such notions as are injurious to these two grand principles of our Christian faith, the sacrifice of Christ, and his eternal priesthood; which have been extremely wrongly and sorely disgraced more ways than one, particularly by the doctrine and practice of the Romish mass; which it will be useful briefly to demonstrate while these things remain fresh in our minds, before I pass to the fourth general part of my discourse.

The church of Rome binds all her members, under pain of eternal damnation, to believe both that the very same body and the very same blood which were once offered by Christ upon the cross, are daily offered up to God by the mass priest, and likewise (as if this were not enough) that every such offering made by the priest is a propitiatory sacrifice, nay, makes atonement as well for the dead as for the living.

Which is so directly contrary to the very scope and drift of the apostle, both there and in many other places of this Epistle, that if they had studied it on purpose, they could not have framed a more manifest contradiction to his discourse; for the very sinews and strength of all the apostle's arguments consist in this, that the very best of the legal sacrifices were therefore insufficient to take away sin, because they were to be perpetually repeated; the greatest and most solemn of them every

year, many of them every day, and others as oft as particular occasions required. Now, if Christ's sacrifice must of necessity be thus repeated every day, who sees not that (if the apostle argue well,) it is not more sufficient than the legal, but labours under the same imperfection, and could no more take away sin than they did? For if it could, why is it repeated? This is as strong an argument against it as the apostle frames against the other, and either he concludes nothing against the Jews, or this Romish doctrine is false, which makes his conclusion strike as home against Christianity.

This might serve for a short confutation of the sacrifices of the mass, as they are commonly called; but that you may see our church was not rash in that sentence it hath pronounced against these sacrifices, as "blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits[g]," I shall a little more distinctly unfold how contradictory they are to the doctrine of the apostle which I have now delivered, and that in these three regards: first, with regard to the priest, viz. Christ, who offered for us; secondly, with regard to the sacrifice which he offered, which was himself; and thirdly, with regard to the completeness of it, in that it was sacrificed but once.

1. For the first of these, it appears sufficiently by what hath been already said, that Christ is the only, the sole and perpetual priest of the New Testament, who alone offers a propitiatory sacrifice for us. In which his priesthood excels those of old, that whereas they were many priests, we have but one, who by himself alone expiates sin, being an immortal, eternal High Priest, who hath no colleague to assist him, much less any successor in his office to come after him, because he hath, as the apostle expressly declares, ἀπαράβατον, *an unchangeable priesthood*, or 'a priesthood which passeth not over to another,' as the word is more literally translated in the margin of Heb. vii. 24. A priesthood that indeed cannot pass over from him to any successor, because he remains for ever himself, to do the work of a priest for us. In this lies the force of the apostle's argument in that place, that the priesthood of the New Testament belongs only to him who is immortal. For otherwise he had not established a necessary difference between the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of Aaron. The latter

[g] Article XXXI.

of which by reason of death went from one to another, and suffered not one and the same priest continually to enjoy his office: but Christ continueth for ever; and therefore his priesthood abideth in himself alone, and is not transmitted to any other: as much as to say, he is the only priest of the New Testament, which St. Chrysostom[h] concludes out of these words: "As there were many priests because they were mortal, so here is but one because he is immortal." This is a demonstration that there are no such priests in the church as can offer propitiatory sacrifices to God, for this belongs to Christ alone, who is the sole Priest of the New Testament; and they who in our language are called by that name (viz. the ministers of Christ in his church) derive it from another fountain, not from the word which signifies a sacrifice, but from the word (*presbyter*, whence our English name *priest*) which signifies an elder, that is, one who orders and rules the church of Christ, and ministers therein with authority according to his directions.

And now it may be fit to consider that if they whom Christ hath appointed to minister in his church were priests, truly and properly so called, it is very strange that they should never be commended to us by this name in the holy Scriptures: but whereas their office is described by great variety of names, yet is this name never so much as once given to them in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, their Epistles, or the Revelation. Is it reasonable to think that Christ appointed an order of men to be very priests, with a commission from him to offer such an excellent sacrifice, as the like was never offered by any priest but himself; and he never give them this name, in this sense, when so many other titles are given them, such as *bishops*, or *overseers*, *elders*, *rulers*, *shepherds*, *watchmen*, *angels*, *ministers*, *stewards*, *servants*, and such like? One would rather conclude that the Holy Ghost, avoiding this name so carefully, intended to shut the door against such pretences as are now made by sacrificing priests, who, in truth, have nothing to do in the house of God. For it is directly against Christ's order, nay, against his office, for any man to go about to offer a proper sacrifice for sin.

Much less can they offer Christ; that is impossible to be done

[h] In Heb. vii. 24. [hom. xiii. tom. xii. p. 132 D.]

by any one but by himself. He alone would offer his own body to God, and it would not have been efficacious if any person had done it but himself.

And moreover there is this further consideration, which utterly destroys this fancy, that no sinner can offer this sacrifice, or exercise this priesthood, for it is perfectly contrary to the discourse of the apostle in Heb. vii. 26, 27: *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.* None but such a priest as this can do any service to make propitiation for us. One that hath no sin of his own to offer for, that is *undefiled* and perfectly *separate from sinners;* made *higher than the heavens,* that is, none upon earth, none but the Lord Jesus, whose priesthood is of that high supereminent nature, that it can be exercised by none but himself alone.

And if you observe it, you will find that the high priest was ever either greater than the sacrifice, as in the legal offerings, or at least equal to it in dignity, as in this sacrifice of Christ. Now who dare say that the priest who officiates in the sacrament is either superior or equal to Christ? who we may be sure therefore is not offered up by him that ministers in sacrifice to God, nor is he by the same reason a proper priest in that sense wherein the priests of old and Christ were, who offered propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men.

That is the first thing.

2. And we may argue as strongly from the sacrifice itself as from the priest, that it cannot be offered in the mass. For this sacrifice is but one, as the priest is no more, and it is the priest himself who was offered by himself in sacrifice, and cannot be offered by any other, as will appear by considering briefly, but distinctly, wherein this sacrifice consisted, the entire essence of which was made up of two parts. His passion and bloody death upon the cross, where he offered up himself for us, and his presentation of this sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary. For after he had offered, *he entered in with his own blood into the holy place;* as the apostle speaks, ix. 12, and proves in the rest of that chapter, and in this, from that great and

solemn sacrifice which was offered every year by the high priest under the law, with the blood of which, slain at the altar, he went into the sanctuary, and sprinkled it before the mercy seat. Now there is neither of those parts of Christ's sacrifice in the Romish mass; nor can there be either of them, neither the bloody death of Christ, nor the presentation of it in the heavens. And therefore it is impossible that the mass should be the very same essential real sacrifice which Christ offered, unless it be possible that a thing should be without its proper being; that there should be an whole entire thing without the parts of which it consists, which is a palpable contradiction.

And the truth of it is, this doctrine is full of contradictions, like that of transubstantiation, which is the foundation on which it is built. But this one may suffice under this head, that there can be no propitiation or remission of sin, without shedding of blood; for it is the express affirmation of the apostle in the 22nd verse of the foregoing chapter. And there can be no shedding of blood without suffering again. Now the Romish church itself confesses that there is no shedding of blood in the sacrament, nor doth Christ suffer again, (for they call this an unbloody sacrifice,) and therefore with the same breath they confess that there is no propitiatory sacrifice in the sacrament, because there is no blood, without which there can be no propitiation.

As for the invention of an unbloody sacrifice, it is as contradictory to the apostle as all the rest. For he often makes Christ's sacrifice and his passion, or shedding of blood, the very same thing, and from thence concludes he did not offer himself often, because he did not suffer often. Particularly chap. ix. 25, 26, &c., *Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* From whence it is evident, that if the apostle could speak and reason aright, there is no sacrifice of Christ without suffering, and consequently the unbloody sacrifice (which is a sacrifice without suffering) is a mere imagination.

3. But the strongest confutation of all is contained in the third thing I mentioned, viz. the perfection of Christ's sacrifice, which consists in this, that it was but *once offered*, and thereby

perfected for ever them that are sanctified. From which the apostle demonstrates the weakness and imperfection of all the legal sacrifices; that they were often offered, and never ceased to be repeated. And we in like manner conclude, that the mass being celebrated every day innumerable times, nobody knows how often, cannot be the very sacrifice which Christ offered. For then the apostle did not say true, when he tells us it was offered but once, nor did he argue well when he places the imperfection of the legal sacrifices in this, that they were often repeated; because, according to the doctrine, Christ's sacrifice must also be continually repeated, nay, oftener than the legal; and is no less imperfect than they were.

And here, having touched upon this before, let me only represent to you (what a learned and pious doctor of our church[i] hath observed long ago) how impossible it is to answer a Jew who enters into a dispute against our religion, if this doctrine of the Roman church be true. For thus he may reason; "We once had daily sacrifices as well as you, and our high priest also went every year into the holy place with the blood of a most solemn sacrifice, to make atonement for us. Now you Christians teach your people that none of those would take away sin, because your apostle says they were often offered, which was a confession of their imperfection, for if sin had been taken away by them, they would have ceased to have been offered. But if this were a sufficient reason against our sacrifices, it is as good against that which your High Priest offered, which hath taken away sins no more than ours; for if it did, why do you repeat it often, and offer it daily, as our priests did their sacrifices? Either the principle of your apostle is not true, or your present principles and practices are false and unlawful.

"Your priests stand daily ministering and offering the same sacrifice that was offered by your great High Priest, which is the thing your apostle objects against our sacrifices, to prove them to be defective and insufficient. And therefore yours is liable to the same exception, and according to your apostle's argument against us, and your own practice among yourselves, this sacrifice of Christ, which you say abolishes ours, can never take away sins. For it is more the same sacrifice (according

[i] Dr. Jackson. [Comment. on the Creed, book x. chap. 54. vol. ix. p. 582.]

to your principles) than the sacrifices of the law were, a great deal more the same; and yet it is oftener repeated and offered over and over again, in more places than any legal sacrifices were."

To this argument men may seek for an evasion, but it is impossible to make a solid reply. For if it be driven home, it will prove the sacrifice of Christ to be more imperfect than those under the law; because the oftener this sacrifice is repeated, the weaker and the more insufficient we must in reason think the first offering of it to have been. For if repetition argue weakness and insufficiency, (as the apostle says it doth,) then the more frequently the repetition is made, the greater it argues the weakness of it to be. Now this sacrifice is repeated infinitely more frequently than the Jewish sacrifices were, being offered, it is impossible to tell how many thousands or millions of times every morning.

There were also a great many other considerations which arise from thence, of which it is impossible to give any satisfactory account. I will mention no more than two.

First, it was never heard of that the blood of any sacrifice, after it was carried by the high priest into the most holy place, was brought out again to the altar to be offered there, as this doctrine supposes the body and blood of Christ to be.

Secondly, if this could be done, who can conceive that the precious body and blood of Christ should become more acceptable with God, being upon a mass altar, than it is now at the right hand of God, where he appears continually with his sacrifice in the presence of God for us. And if it be not more acceptable, to what purpose is it repeated? and how can it become more propitiatory when a sinner presents it, than when it is presented by Christ himself?

What a strange thing it is to bring the Son of God himself down from heaven for this purpose, that a man may offer him again to God, as if he had not done it sufficiently himself, (and then to desire an angel may carry him up again.) For so the words of the prayer are in the mass; unless we understand, as I doubt not that they anciently did, by these gifts, which they desire the angel may carry unto God, the bread and the wine; which destroys the whole doctrine of a proper sacrifice, by taking away the matter of it, viz. the substance of Christ's

body and blood, which this sense of those words (and it is the true one) supposes not to be there. And so to proceed to the fourth and last thing wherein I have told you the supereminence of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood consists, which my text peculiarly mentions; from whence the like inferences will arise with those now named, against the pretended sacrifice of the mass.

IV.

It is this, that as Christ was both sacrifice and priest, so by the sacrifice he offered he was consecrated to be both King and Priest; both those dignities were united in him, who was such a sacrifice, that together with his eternal priesthood, he had all power in heaven and earth bestowed upon him as the reward of his humbling himself to death, *even the death of the cross*, for our sakes. So St. Paul teaches in the second to the Philippians, ver. 8, 9, 10; and it is the great scope of this Epistle to the Hebrews to show that he is a royal High Priest, an High Priest with a kingly power; whereby he is able himself to dispense the virtue and benefits of his passion unto all his faithful followers, who dutifully depend upon him, and place their hopes and happiness on the favour of his intercession, and the blessings he is about thereby to bestow upon them.

And this particularly is the main scope of my text, *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God;* the last words of which (*sat down at God's right hand*) import these four things, which make a very wide difference between him and the priest of Aaron's line.

I. First, that he is such an High Priest, as not only went into the holy place with the blood of his sacrifice, but continues and stays there, and that as in his settled place of abode. The high priest among the Jews would go indeed once in a year (and no more) into the *holy of holies;* but he was to come out again as soon as he had presented the blood of the sacrifice, which he carried with him before the ark, which was the throne of God; and could not be permitted to stay there any longer than till he had performed this service, for which he was to return thither again the next year. But our great High Priest is here described quite otherways, as one that upon

his going into the heavens (the true most holy place, where the Divine Majesty indeed dwells) *sat down*, in token of his abiding there with God, and having no need to go out of the heavenly sanctuary to sacrifice again for the sins of the people.

II. Which is the second thing implied in these words, and the necessary consequence of the former, that he is not to offer sacrifice any more, but hath finished that work which he came into the world to do, and is now at rest from his labours, which is betokened by his sitting down, after the manner of those who have done their business; and his business being sacrificing, it was hereby declared to be at an end, and so concluded that nothing more of this kind was to be performed for the expiation of sins. For

III. It is here implied that he had made a full and perfect satisfaction for the sins of the world; else God would not have honoured him with an exaltation to a place so high and so near himself at his own right hand. Though resting there betokens such a cessation from the work he had undertaken in the behalf of mankind, as both assures us he had no more to do, and that God was fully satisfied with what he had done. For *he for ever sat down on the right hand of God.* From every one of which particulars we have the most evident demonstrations, that the sacrifice which is pretended to be made of Christ continually in the mass is a mere figment.

For this would be to bring him every day out of the heavenly sanctuary, directly against the first thing here expressly asserted, that he *sat down* when he entered into it, not to come out again to be sacrificed any more.

Which, secondly, destroys the excellency of Christ's sacrifice by the perpetual repetition of it; after the manner of the Aaronical priests, who were continually offering the same sacrifices (ver. 11), and yet had not effected what they intended. Nothing can be a greater disparagement to Christ's sacrifice, if it must be thus continually offered, though the same sacrifice. For it directly crosses the apostle's discourse in my text, (which is the reason I again mention it,) wherein he shows that *every priest under the law stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifice. But this man,* (or this priest,) *after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down, &c.:* that he was not to offer any more, no, not the same sacri-

fice, having for ever done the business for which sacrifices were offered by his one sacrifice for sins, and by one single offering of that sacrifice. So the apostle is to be understood, it is evident by the disparity which he observes between this and the sacrifices of other priests. They offered the same sacrifices continually, but he offered only one sacrifice, never to be offered again, because of its eternal virtue, implied in the word *for ever.*

Therefore there is no way for the usual evasion of those who maintain the sacrifice of the mass; which they say does not suppose the sacrifice on the cross to be imperfect, because this in the mass is not another sacrifice, but the very same with that which Christ then offered. For if this be supposed, the apostle did not reason aright when he here argues against the repetition, even of the same sacrifices, as a sign of their imperfection; and upon that account saith that Christ is no more sacrificed, because his one sacrifice is sufficient for ever, which he affirms again, ver. 14, *By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* And indeed the repetition of the same sacrifice for sin doth as much argue it hath not, by once using it, cured the disease for which it was administered.

Which is a manifest dishonour to the sacrifice of Christ; as if it had not perfectly given satisfaction to God. For if it have, (which is the last of the three things now mentioned,) then it need not, no, it ought not to be again sacrificed as a propitiation for those sins which it hath already purged and done away. The usual shift for the putting by the force of this argument will be taken away by the next thing I have to add for the explication of my text.

IV. The fourth and principal thing herein plainly asserted is, that Christ is such a Priest as hath *all power in heaven and earth;* a Priest with royal dignity and authority, which is implied in his sitting at the right hand of God. For that is as much as to say, he is advanced to the highest degree of glory and power, and hath the management of all the affairs of mankind, nay, of the whole world, as the supreme Governor under God the Father of all, and therefore is called the *Lord of all,* the *heir of all things.*

This is the chief difference between him and the priests of old, who, when they went into the holy place, only stood

before the throne of God as ministers and servants of his, who were appointed by him to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat. But our great High Priest Christ Jesus, having presented his own blood in the heavens, *sat down*, and that in no meaner place than next to the Divine Majesty.

This opposition is manifest unto those who attend to my text and the words foregoing, comparing them together. *Every priest*, saith the apostle, ver. 11, *standeth*, (that was the posture of the priests of Aaron's line in all their services [k],) *ministering and offering oftentimes, &c.: but this man*, or this priest, *having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down for ever, &c.;* which denotes him to be more than a *minister* in the heavenly *sanctuary*, (as the apostle calls him [l],) having now ended all his ministration in the form of a servant, and being exalted to the office of a King, and made such a copartner with God the Father in his kingdom, that he hath committed all judgment to our Saviour, and given him to have life in himself; and *made him the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.*

This is the height of his priesthood, the very sum of what the apostle had to say in this matter, as he speaks viii. 1, *Now of the things we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens:* such an High Priest as hath power to apply the merits of his sacrifice, and bestow the blessings he thereby procures for us.

Which overthrows the pretensions of those who say the sacrifice of the mass is necessary for the application of the merit and virtue of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, which is a medicine indeed powerful enough, but will not work, say they, no more than any other medicine, unless it be applied to us, which is done by the sacrifice of the mass. For as this goodly contrivance is a downright absurdity, (being as much as to say, that a sacrifice of propitiation is applied to us by a sacrifice of propitiation, a satisfaction by a satisfaction, nay, by the same satisfaction made over and over again,)so it is against the evident scope of the apostle in this discourse, which is to show that Christ himself, appearing continually in the presence of God as sacrificed for us, hath full and absolute power by one perpetual

[k] Psalm cxxxiv. 1. [l] Heb. viii. 2.

continuation of his sacrifice offered for us in the heavens, to apply the fruit and benefit of it to us, especially when we worthily commemorate it, and represent to God what he hath done for us, with a lively faith and ardent love. By these we apply ourselves to him, in the use of this holy means which he has ordained for all, the blessed effects of his sacrifice, which continues for ever in the heavens in full force, and is imparted to those by his royal power who seek the favour of God through his one sacrifice alone, in the way that he hath appointed. That is, the holy communion is instituted as a means by which, if we have a lively faith in him, he himself applies to us the everlasting efficacy of his sacrifice out of the heavens, from whence he dispenses himself unto all his faithful worshippers.

And to feign any other application of it, by a renewed sacrifice here upon earth, is the greatest disgrace that can be to the continuance of it in the heavens, and to his Almighty power at God's right hand, to communicate the virtue of it unto us, by working faith in us, and by converting us unto God, that he may make us capable of the benefit of his redemption; and by pleading his victorious sacrifice for us when we are converted, that our sins may be actually forgiven us, and we may have right to eternal salvation.

Whence it is that as an High Priest in the heavens he is said *to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*[l], which he doth as our intercessor with God, by virtue of his blood commending us and all our concerns unto him, especially our prayers for remission of sin, and for a power to obey him, that we may find mercy with him[m]. And never are our prayers more likely to be heard than when we piously celebrate the memory of his bloody sacrifice in the communion of his body and blood; which is so called, because we therein communicate with him in his death and passion, and are made partakers of his sacrifice which he offered for us, and of the benefits of his intercession on our behalf. Which intercession is nothing else but his continued sacrifice in the heavens, wherewith he appears in the presence of God for us.

APPLICATION.

Now what a singular favour and comfort is this, (if we rightly

[l] Heb. ii. 17. [m] Heb. iv. 15, 16.

understand it,) that we may all have access to God with the highest confidence; and draw nigh to his altar (which the priests of old only did) as so many priests and kings unto God, who have the freest liberty to approach him with assured hope he will graciously accept of such poor oblations as we are able to make him, nay, that we shall prevail for further blessings, even all the grace we stand in need of for our eternal salvation, through this powerful priesthood of Christ Jesus whereof I have been treating.

For he is as able as he is willing to bless us. Able, because he is the Prince of life; and willing, because he is our High Priest; made compassionate also by his own sufferings, and by being a sacrifice for us.

How joyfully should we draw nigh to God at all times, if we be of this belief! How readily should we embrace all occasions of assembling ourselves together, especially at the holy communion! Where, though there be no proper and propitiatory sacrifice offered for us, yet there is a commemoration made of that very sacrifice which Christ hath already offered, and continues for ever in the heavens. Which the ancient Christians therefore called a sacrifice, because this commemoration is made with the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and the oblation of our souls and bodies to God, made acceptable to him by the sacrifice of Christ, which we commemorate, and which he continually presents before God in the heavens.

These things are very different, to say that the sacrament is a sacrifice, and to say that Christ is therein properly sacrificed. For the commemoration of another sacrifice may be truly a sacrifice, as a representation of that sacrifice unto God, whereby we supplicate his grace and favour. And so is the sacrament of Christ's body and blood; not a mere representation of it unto us, but a representation of it also unto God. Unto him this action is directed as a thankful commemoration, which we make to him of what his Son hath suffered for us; whereby we put him in mind of his passion, by setting the monuments thereof before him, and entreating him for the sake of his sacrifice of himself to be propitious to us miserable sinners.

This is the very end and intention of his sacrament, to beseech the Father of mercies, that by this commemoration of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, our sacrifice of prayer and

thanksgiving with the oblation of ourselves, may be accepted with him through the powerful intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ for us, which he makes by his continued appearing before God for us as our sacrifice.

Christ is here commemorated and received by us for the same end for which he was given and suffered for us; which was, that through him we receiving forgiveness of sins may have all our services accepted by God the Father, who hath that very sacrifice continually before him in the heavens which he hath commanded us to commemorate upon earth; not to offer up Christ again, (that is impossible,) but to offer up the sacrifices before mentioned with this commemoration, as a means of having communion with Christ in that sacrifice which continues for ever in heaven.

He reads the gospel with strange prejudices, who thinks he sees more than this in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. The very institution of which is a sufficient confutation of the sacrifice of the mass. For there is not the least mention in the institution of this sacrament, either of a sacrifice or of a priesthood, unless it be in those words, *which was broken for you*, and *which was shed for many for the remission of sins*. And they relate to the death and passion of Christ upon the cross where he shed his blood, which the church of Rome confesses is not shed in this pretended sacrifice; which therefore hath no foundation in Christ's institution.

Now there can be no sacrifice unless instituted by Christ; for they themselves confess it is not in the power of the church to ordain a sacrifice; and in Christ's words or actions, when he instituted the sacrament, there is not so much as a shadow of a sacrifice ordained by him. As I might show more largely, if I had time, and if there needed any further confutation of this imaginary sacrifice.

Which is a new conceit (in comparison) in that very church which now contends so earnestly about it. For Gabriel Biel (who wrote not much above two hundred years ago several lectures upon the mass) honestly declares that their meaning then was, when they said Christ was offered in the sacrament, first, that there was a representation and a memorial of the true sacrifice made by Christ upon the cross; secondly, that this memorial makes us partakers of the same. Nay, Peter

Lombard himself (many years before that) putting this question, Whether that which the priest doth may properly be called a sacrifice, makes this answer[n]: "To this may be said briefly, that which is offered and consecrated by the priest is called a sacrifice and oblation, because it is the remembrance and representation of the true sacrifice and holy oblation which was made upon the altar of the cross;" which being a plain confession it is not the very sacrifice which Christ made, but the remembrance and representation of it, we may certainly conclude also, that if there remain no sacrifice in the church, (in the proper and natural sense of the word,) as this master teaches, then there can be no priests remaining properly so called. For such as the kind of sacrifice is, such is also the kind of priesthood. If the sacrifice be not a sacrifice properly, the priesthood cannot be so but only in a figurative and improper manner of speech.

And indeed the whole discourse I have made concerning the royal priesthood of Christ utterly destroys the Romish notion of priesthood, which they say consists in offering proper sacrifice. For if we demand by what authority they do this? who called them to this office, of what order of priests they are? after the order of Aaron or of Melchisedec? it is not possible for them to give a tolerable answer. They are not of Aaron's order, (they themselves confess,) for so Christ was not a priest: and of Melchisedec's order they cannot be: for this priesthood having inseparably a kingdom annexed to it, it must necessarily follow they are kings as well as priests, and that properly; which, as one of our authors[o] said long ago, would be a very proper thing indeed.

I conclude this in a few words; the reasons which were anciently given why the sacrament is called a sacrifice were these. First, because it hath a resemblance of the true and real sacrifice upon the holy cross, which is here commemorated, (and it is a common way of speaking, as St. Austin[p] shows, to call the signs and resemblances of things by the names of the things of which they are figures.) Secondly, because it communicates to us in the due commemoration of it, the effects of the true

[n] Lib. iv. Distinct. xii. [quæst. 7. Opp. tom. ii. col. 866.]

[o] Dr. Whitaker. [Controv. iv. quæst. 1. tom. ii. pp. 523, 524.]

[p] [Epist. xcviii. tom. ii. col. 267.]

and real death and sacrifice of Christ. Both which we steadfastly believe, and give God thanks for making us partakers, by this means, of the death of his Son. And we are willing to allow a third reason why it is called a sacrifice, because in this commemoration there is an offering and presenting of Christ and of his passion unto God, by the faith of holy communicants; who beseech God for the sake of it to grant them remission of sins, and all other benefits of his passion.

And this is a sacrifice peculiar to Christian people, who offer this commemoration as a sacrifice distinct from all the rest of mankind, devoting themselves in a more solemn manner unto God's faithful service; and in a peculiar way proper to them alone, deprecating his divine displeasure and supplicating his grace and favour.

How carefully then ought we to improve such holy opportunities; exciting our faith in God our Saviour, inflaming our love, encouraging our hope, and raising our joy by recounting the blessings we have already received from him, and all those which we still expect from his incomparable bounty and uncontrollable power.

We have the greatest reason, if we understand our religion, silently to applaud our happiness, (if I may so speak,) in being called to be of the household of faith and of the family of God; over which he hath set such a great High Priest, as I have described. Under whose care we are, and who is so full of pity and commiseration, so wise to discern what is good for us, so gracious and inclinable to relieve us, so just to his word, so faithful to his office, so holy and without spot in his nature, so absolute in his dominion over all creatures that may either hurt or pleasure us, so powerful to execute the desires of his will, so settled in his power at God's right hand, that none can put him out of his throne, nor pluck his sheep out of his hand, so watchful over his flock, and withal eternal in his love, and of an everlasting strength.

If these things be not sufficient to comfort us under all the troubles of this life, and under all the trouble and anguish of our consciences also, we must remain for ever (but it will be our own fault) without satisfaction. Did we consider indeed only our own meanness in respect of the incomprehensible majesty of God, it might sink us into the most melancholy thoughts, and

make us doubt of his love, and suspect he would never be reconciled to such insolent offenders as dared lift up themselves against the Most High. But when we believe that God in his infinite love hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, and sent him to die for us, and exalted our nature in his person at his own right hand, where he lives for evermore to make intercession for us by the power of his everlasting priesthood, and in the virtue of his all-sufficient sacrifice, especially when we most thankfully commemorate it; there needs no more to be done to give us assurance of all that we can desire from his goodness. Which we extremely dishonour if we pretend there can be no peace and reconciliation with him, unless the Son of God be in the substance of his body and blood sacrificed every day here upon earth for the propitiation of our sins.

They that infuse such fancies into men's souls apparently disparage, as I have shown, the sovereign priesthood of Christ at the right hand of God, and the everlasting efficacy of his one all-sufficient sacrifice, once offered to purge us from all sin.

For the partaking of which let us dispose ourselves by making him that oblation which will qualify us to offer all the rest acceptably to him, and to receive the entire benefit of his satisfaction and intercession; viz. the oblation of ourselves, souls and bodies, to his service.

Which is the very first and immediate inference, you may observe, that the apostle makes from his long discourse concerning the excellence of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood in ver. 19, 20, 21, 22, below my text. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, &c., *and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart*, (i. e. a sincere desire and purpose in all things to please God,) *in full assurance of faith*, nothing doubting, that is, of the truth of the Christian religion, and particularly of the authority of the Lord Jesus as our royal High Priest in the heavens; *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*, (i. e. not being conscious to ourselves of any secret sins to which we are indulgent, though the world sees them not,) *and having our bodies washed with pure water*, (i. e. our lives and conversations holy and without blemish, according to the profession we made in baptism, and the

instructions we have since received out of the gospel of Christ.) For we are *sanctified with the washing of water by the word*, saith St. Paul[p]. *Let us hold the profession of our faith without wavering;* resolve, that is, to adhere unto Christ, in a constant belief and profession of the power of his one sacrifice once offered for our sins, and of his power at the right hand of God to make us partakers thereof, which he will certainly do *if we walk in the light as God is in the light;* for then *we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*[q]. He will cleanse us, *if we cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*[r]. Which is the same with the apostle's language in the words before alleged, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.* A plain allusion to the custom among the Jews, who, if they had touched any impure thing forbidden by the law of ceremonies, were first to wash themselves, and so approach to the sanctuary; which was but a figure of that purity, not only in our outward actions, but in our hearts and consciences, wherewith all Christian worshippers ought to address themselves to the Father of mercies, through the intercession of their great High Priest Christ Jesus, who by his one sacrifice continued for ever in the heavens will procure them acceptance, and present them and all their sacrifices as well pleasing to God, and will bless them out of the high and holy place where he lives continually, and at last *present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*[s]. Amen.

[p] Ephes. v. 26. [q] 1 John i. 7. [r] 2 Cor vii. 1. [s] [Jude 24.]

A SERMON

AGAINST CENSURING.

PREACHED

AT ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

ON THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT, 1688.

A SERMON AGAINST CENSURING.

1 Cor. iv. 5.

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.

In these words there is a double supposition, and thereupon a weighty inference.

The suppositions are, first, that there will be another advent or coming of our Lord, besides that which we now commemorate, when he appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*.

Secondly, that the end and intention of his second coming is to judge us, as the foregoing words tell us: *He that judgeth me is the Lord;* therefore let none of you be so bold as to *judge before the time, until the Lord come,* whose proper business it is to judge others.

That is the inference he makes from those two known doctrines. Since the Lord will come again on purpose to judge us all, let not us take upon us to prejudge one another, but suspend our censures till he come to judgment.

The suppositions are so well understood, and I hope so steadfastly believed, that I need not go about to prove them. They are among the *first principles* or elements *of the doctrine of Christ*, and it is a shame to be continually laying again *the foundation* (as it is called, Heb. vi. 1, 2) *of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment;* the belief of which we own by professing the Christian religion, which, in opposition to the Jewish pedagogy, is thus described in the same epistle, Heb. xii. 22, 23; *We are not come to mount Sinai,* (such a dispensation, that is, as that of Moses, whose law was given upon that mount,) *but we are come to mount Sion, to the city*

of the living God, and to God the judge of all: as much as to say, When we are made members of the Christian church, (figured by mount Sion and Jerusalem,) we acknowledge God to be the Judge; first, of all things, not only the outward actions, which the Mosaical law chiefly regulated, but even the thoughts and counsels of the heart: and secondly, of all persons, not only Jews, but the whole Gentile world, of whatsoever rank or condition they be; who shall be called to an account for all things whatsoever, open or secret, known or concealed; and accordingly receive their doom from the almighty and righteous Judge of the world.

Let me only therefore remember you, that it is necessary to keep these great confessed truths continually in mind, and carry this sense about with us every where, that there will be a day when the Lord Jesus who came *in the form of a servant*, to visit us in great humility, to give us his laws, and to die for our sins, will come again in glorious majesty, not as a servant, but as a sovereign, attended with all the host of heaven, to call us before him, and examine how his laws have been observed by us, and what fruit there hath been of his shedding his precious blood for us.

This if we thought of daily, with a lively belief that, as he is a most impartial Judge, so the greatest secrets cannot be concealed from his knowledge; it would move us to observe all his laws with the greatest care and diligence; because he will certainly and unavoidably sentence those to the heaviest punishments, who contemn his authority by the violation of any of them, particularly this in my text, which the apostle infers from those principles, not to judge any thing before the time, but to leave all to the judgment of the Lord.

For the understanding of which it will be necessary to do these three things:

First, to show what it is to judge.

Secondly, how the apostle is to be understood, when he saith, *Judge nothing.*

Thirdly, what the reasons and grounds are upon which this precept stands, in the right sense and meaning of it.

I.

For the first of these, *to judge* sometimes signifies no more

than to make such a difference in our thoughts between one thing and another, when they are presented to our understandings, as our reason shows us there is in the things themselves. To discern, for instance, between truth and falsehood, so as to approve the one and to reject the other; in which sense we ought to *judge every thing*, and to admit nothing till we see good reason to entertain it: for it is a Christian virtue to make a discrimination between good and bad, true and false; and as we find things upon examination, so to determine whether they are to be received or rejected.

And therefore the apostle's meaning cannot be to forbid us to *judge*, in this sense of the word, for he himself saith in this very Epistle, chap. x. 15, *I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say*, i. e. I desire not to be believed if I speak not reason which you understand, and therefore I leave it to yourselves to determine, upon serious consideration, whether I speak not the truth. And again, chap. xi. 13, *Judge in yourselves, is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?* i. e. I need say no more, for you can resolve what is fit in this matter, if you please to consult with your own sober thoughts.

We must find then another sense of the word *judge*, which is this:

2. To pass sentence upon other men's actions or qualities, pronouncing them either good or bad. And thus the apostle uses the word in the two verses immediately preceding my text, verse 3, *But with me it is a small matter that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment;* that is, I make no great account what opinion you or anybody else hath of my fidelity in the stewardship committed to me, (mentioned verse 2,) of dispensing the mysteries of the gospel of Christ; for whether you judge well or ill of me, you may be mistaken, and therefore I am not much concerned about it; *yea, I judge not my own self;* that is, I do not absolutely depend upon my own opinion of my fidelity, though I cannot but know myself better than any one else can do, because I may overlook many things which the Lord sees, and so think better of myself than I deserve. And therefore, (as it follows, verse 4,) *though I know nothing by myself, yet I am not thereby justified; for he that judgeth me is the Lord:* it is not as others judge of us, or as we judge of ourselves, but as the Lord, who cannot be deceived, shall

judge. In all which discourse *judging* is passing a sentence, either for or against another person, either to acquit and clear him, or to censure and condemn him. And thus it is frequently used in other places, particularly for passing a sentence of condemnation upon others, accusing them as guilty, and censuring them to be worthy of punishment. For example, *Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth*[a], that is, condemn him of profaneness or contempt of God's laws, in taking his liberty of eating any thing without distinction of meats: and verse 4, *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?* that is, condemnest him over whom thou hast no jurisdiction?

And thus it is to be understood in my text for censuring and condemning others; which is an office that belongs not to us, who seldom have a sufficient cognizance of their case.

Which may be done either inwardly in our own thoughts, or outwardly also in our words and speeches, whereby we pronounce the sentence which our mind hath passed upon them; between which two (inward and outward censures of others) there is no small difference; and therefore this is a distinction which ought to be carefully observed, because it may be lawful to pass a judgment upon men's actions in our own thoughts, when we ought not to signify it to others by our words. For first, the persons upon whom we pass a judgment may be so much superior to us in dignity and authority, or they may excel in so many eminent virtues, and do so much good to the world, that it may not be fit for us to speak of every thing we see amiss in them, which we may truly judge in our minds to be faults: or secondly, the company to whom we speak may be such as will not make a good use of our judgment, but a bad; which is a just cause why we should forbear to declare our judgment, whatsoever we may justly think in our own breasts: or thirdly, the thing itself, which we cannot but condemn, may be of such a nature, and done so secretly, that it will be a breach of charity to speak of it unto any but him that is guilty of it.

Now the word *judge* being thus explained, I proceed to the second thing.

[a] Rom. xiv. 3.

II.

How the apostle is to be understood, when he saith, *Judge nothing:* for it may seem an impossible precept, seeing there are many things which ought to be condemned, and many persons who are apparently guilty of them. We must therefore understand him with some limitations, that we may make a wise judgment concerning judging other men, and not let all things they do pass without censure, because we are bound in some cases not to censure them at all.

And for our clearer information, I shall show, first, what judgment is not here forbidden; secondly, what is.

First, with respect to the former of these, I shall only put you in mind of these three things.

1. That public judgments and judicial censures are not here condemned, for they have the divine authority to warrant them, and human societies cannot subsist without them: therefore let none imagine there is any thing in these words either forbidding a Christian to be a magistrate, or forbidding a magistrate to judge and condemn evil things and evil-doers. For as magistracy is God's ordinance for the good of mankind, so it is the duty of every magistrate to condemn and punish such as do evil; being *sent* or commissioned *by God for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well*[b]. They do ill then that censure and condemn this office, or those that execute it; for it is that which all men do in their own families, where, having authority as parents, or masters, they correct what is done amiss.

2. And as there is nothing in these words forbidding magistrates to exercise their office, so they contain no prohibition unto private persons either to form an opinion concerning others in their mind, upon the serious observation of the course of their actions, or to reprove and rebuke each other for their sin, according to the rules of truth and charity: for it is necessary to form a judgment concerning others in our minds, that we may avoid the company of evil men, and preserve ourselves from the danger of their contagion: and charity being the sum of all our duty to our neighbour, prudent and seasonable reproof is often the greatest charity we can bestow upon them.

[b] 1 Pet. ii. 14.

Let the righteous smite me, (saith David,) *and it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head*[c].

3. And as we may thus judge men to be worthy of reproof, and take upon us to tell them of their faults, so there is nothing in these words forbidding us to speak of them unto others in their absence, especially when they are not amended by private reproof; provided, first, that we sincerely design the good of those to whom we declare our mind concerning them; and, secondly, that we say no more than is necessary to forewarn their neighbours, lest they be misled and infected by them. We must not blacken them more than needs, much less make them worse than they are; but only give such a just character of them as may serve for a caution to those who otherwise may be in danger to be inveigled by them into their evil courses. Thus our Lord bids his disciples *beware of the scribes,* who looked demurely, and behaved themselves gravely, and made a show of great piety in their long prayers, that they might be the less suspected of bad designs, and the more securely deceive such as trusted to their honesty[d]. And thus St. Paul bids the Ephesians *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*[e]; that is, detect them, and declare against them.

II. These things therefore being not forbidden in these words, let us now consider what judgment or censure is forbidden.

1. And this is certain, that we ought not to judge such things to be sin, nor censure and condemn others upon the account of such things as the law of God doth not condemn: for to censure those things as unlawful which the law of God hath not forbidden, is in truth to judge and condemn the law itself as an imperfect and defective rule of our actions; which is the censure St. James passes upon this practice in those known words of his, *He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law*[f]. Which cannot be meant of any other evil-speaking and judging but this; when a man censures and condemns his brother, where the law doth not censure and condemn what he

[c] Psalm cxli. 5. [d] Luke xx. 46, 47. [e] Ephes. v. 11. [f] James iv. 11.

doth. Whosoever thus judges his brother doth really and truly argue the law of Christ to be wanting in something, which ought to have been prescribed by it. Instead of conforming himself to it, he takes upon him to be a corrector of it, and to make supplements to it; as if it were an insufficient direction to us without his additions: which is the meaning of the next words; *But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* Let such men consider that *there is but one lawgiver,* (as it follows, ver. 12,) *who is able to save or destroy. Who art thou that judgest another?* for such things, that is, as the law of Christ doth not condemn? Who gave thee authority to pronounce first peremptory sentences upon thy brethren, when thou art not appointed by God to be either a lawgiver or a judge of others, especially of such as do not break any law of Christ?

2. As we ought not to judge, that is, condemn men for such things as the law doth not condemn; so in matters of dispute and controversy, where the law is doubtful, or not clear to many good men, we ought to forbear judging those who are not of our mind, or act not as we do, if otherwise they do well. This was a famous case in the apostle's days, when there arose a question, whether the law of Moses should be observed by the disciples of Christ. The apostles said no, because our Lord had abolished it, and left men at liberty to eat, for instance, any meat whatsoever, if they were but thankful and temperate. But the Jewish Christians generally maintained it was still in force; and therefore judged all those to be impious who did not observe his rites and ceremonies. This was a high charge, for which St. Paul in many places reproves them, as going about ignorantly to abolish the law of Christ, whilst they endeavoured to establish that of Moses: particularly in Romans xiv. 3, he tells them, it became such as were *weak in the faith* to be so humble as not to *judge* those who made no difference of meats, which Christ, they steadfastly believed, had made common. Though their ignorance made them scrupulous, it ought not to have made them censorious; especially in such a case, where men followed Christ rather than Moses. Which some think is the meaning of St. James (whose Epistle is written to the Jewish Christians) in the place before named. *He that judgeth his brother* (about such matters as I now

mentioned) *judgeth the law*[g], i. e. the gospel of Christ, called in that Epistle the *royal law*, the *law of liberty*, and the *perfect law of liberty*[h], which absolved them from such obligations. And *if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge;* that is, takest upon thee the office of Christ, to enact those things again into a law which he hath abolished. What a presumption is this! When *there is but one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy, who art thou that judgest another?* That is, whatsoever you may fancy, there is but one to whose laws we ought to be subject, and that is not Moses, but Christ, to whom alone belongs the power of life and death. You may take this authority upon you, if you please, of passing sentences of condemnation upon your brethren, but they are of no force; it being out of any man's power to do those any hurt whose innocent liberty he condemns, or to do those any good, who comply never so far with his scrupulosity. And what the apostles say in this case may be applied to all other wherein good men differ; and both sides think with a great deal of reason. They that have most reason must not yield to the temptation they have to contemn the others' needless scrupulosity; and they that have least must not condemn those, as they are too prone, who take the liberty they dare not use. If both sides think, as they do commonly, that they have equal reason, then there is no more reason for the one to judge the other, than for the other to judge him: but they ought mutually to abstain from all censures of each other's principles or actions.

3. As we ought not to condemn one another in matters doubtful, so much less ought we to pass our judgment upon things that are quite out of the compass of our knowledge. The secrets of men's hearts do not fall within our cognizance, but only as they discover themselves by outward acts; which sometimes may not be good, and yet not proceed from such ill intentions as we may be apt to imagine. In this therefore we ought to be very scrupulous how we judge others to be men of evil designs, whose ill actions will admit of a more favourable interpretation. But when men do good things, it is the highest presumption to judge they are not done with a good mind.

[g] James iv. 11, 12. [h] James ii. 8, 12; i. 25.

This is to pretend to know the hearts of men, into which none can see but God alone. And therefore we must not condemn men of hypocrisy when their actions do not declare it; but refer that to the cognizance of our Lord, who, as it follows after my text, *will bring to light the hidden things of darkness;* that is, discover the inward intentions and purposes of men's souls, and all the close wickedness which was contrived there: and *then every man shall have praise of God.* That is, if he did well, with a good mind, sincerely and heartily, he shall receive commendation; but otherwise, disgrace, and shame, and confusion of face, for being so wicked as to imagine our Lord could see only the outside of things, and be deceived by fair appearances.

IV. In things which fall within the compass of our knowledge, we must take care not to judge either falsely, or rashly, or hypocritically. Under these three are comprehended most of the common censures which men are wont to pass upon others.

1. And then we judge falsely, when we charge another person with that of which we know he is not guilty; which is so great a sin, that it can scarce be committed without the help of other sins, which throw men into it; such as secret hatred, envy, wrath, revenge for former injuries or offences. But whencesoever it proceeds, it is an high piece of injustice; which, as we ought at all times carefully to avoid, so then especially when we undertake to be judges.

2. Rash judgment is when we charge others with such things as we know to be but rumours and suspicions; or which we have only some slight reason to believe. This forward haste to be passing our judgment upon men, though we be well informed, is to be corrected; especially when we declare it upon all occasions, or perhaps without any occasion: but to do this before we be well informed, or have duly considered, is very vicious; and is one of the bad dispositions of mind which lead us to judge the actions of others to proceed from worse principles and ends than really they do.

Thus men are sometimes rashly accused of covetousness, upon the account of such actions as were the effect of caution, not to bestow their charity amiss. Others are charged with pride, and neglect of company, with whom their discretion taught them not to be too familiar. Ambition, and courting

the favour of great men, is laid to the charge of those who thought of nothing but only to please God, in doing that which proves also pleasing unto them. And on the contrary, crossness and perverseness is charged on those who cannot comply with others for fear of offending God. Nothing is more common than to call that wilfulness, which, perhaps, is only weakness; and to condemn that as wickedness which was no more than ignorance or imprudence. And thus whole sects and parties condemn one another in the lump, before they know their circumstances, particularly what advantages they have had or wanted of right information.

In such things, which are not very evident, we ought to suspend our judgment; or rather err on the other side, by judging well of others, which is the virtue we call candour, which argues much wisdom, and no less charity; at least, a great deal of good nature.

3. The last thing of this kind, which I called hypocritical judgment, is when men charge others truly and justly with such bad things as they have really committed; but neither out of dislike to the sins which they condemn, nor with any design to do good, either to the guilty persons, or any other; but merely to gratify their own spleen, or arrogance, or such like bad affections; to which our Saviour seems to have had some respect, when he said, *Judge not, that ye be not judged*[i]; for it follows immediately, *Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?* And he calls this, in effect, an hypocritical judgment, when he adds, *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.* If it be hypocrisy to find out smaller faults in others sooner than greater in oneself, it is much more so to discover any fault whatsoever, merely to please some bad affections which delight in speaking evil of others.

These are dangerous kinds of judging which the apostle here requires us to forbear, false, rash, or hypocritical condemning of others. The first of them is slander; the second is uncharitable censure; the third is ill designing self-love, envy, pride, or some such vice, which we harbour in our breasts.

[i] Matt. vii. 1.

And so I proceed to the third thing I propounded, the reasons and grounds why we ought not to judge in this manner.

III.

There is one reason in my text, and there is another so nearly allied to it, that they are frequently joined in other places.

That in my text is the respect we ought to have to our Lord, whose office it is to judge.

That which is nearly linked with this, is the respect we ought to have unto our brethren; over whom we have no authority, and therefore ought not to take upon us to be their judges.

The first of these, if it be weighed, will make our judging others appear to be an insolence towards our Saviour. The second will represent it as an insolence towards men.

1. First, I say, it is an insolence towards God our Saviour; an usurpation upon his right; a bold intrusion into his office; an arrogating to ourselves that which truly and properly is his sole prerogative: especially when men proceed so far as to dare to judge the very hearts of others, or to censure and condemn them for that which God's law doth not condemn.

For the judging of the heart is a thing which God and our Lord assume as peculiar to themselves. *I, the Lord, search the heart, and try the reins; even to give every man according to his ways*[k]. *I am he*, saith our Saviour, *which searcheth the reins and the heart; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works*[l]. Upon which account it is a most bold presumption, a dangerous arrogance in us to pass a sentence upon the secret purposes and designs of men, of which we know nothing; but they are reserved to the peculiar cognizance of him who alone searches their hearts.

And so it is also in the other case, when we presume to censure that which the law of God itself doth not condemn, either in general or in particular. *He that doth this*, as you heard out of St. James, *speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law;* and he that judgeth the very law casteth off the relation of a subject, and sets up for a sovereign: instead of being a *doer of the law*, he takes upon him to be a judge; that is, he puts himself into the place of God, who, as he is the only maker of laws, so is the only Judge of those who are to be governed by them. He therefore that censures and condemns

[k] Jer. xvii. 10. [l] Rev. ii. 23.

where this lawgiver doth not condemn, forgets himself; and is so lifted up in his own opinion that he usurps the divine authority. Whereas, poor wretch, he can neither *save nor destroy* (as it there follows), but merely show his own folly and arrogance, to the great offence of Almighty God, and the endangering his own soul: *For God*, saith the apostle (ver. 6 of the same chapter), *resisteth the proud;* he resists him as an enemy to his majesty; as one that invades his sovereign right, and intrudes into his sole office of judging others.

2. And though it be less considerable, yet this is not to be neglected, that he who judges the hearts of men, or censures and condemns that in them which the law of God no way censures, commits an insolence upon his brethren, over whom he hath no such authority. He arrogates a jurisdiction over them which he hath no right to exercise; and is guilty of a breach of all the duties we owe to our neighbour; of justice, of charity, and of humility. *Who art thou*, says St. Paul, *that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth*[1]. That is, Whom dost thou take thyself to be, that thou presumest thus to censure and condemn him who is none of thy servant, but the servant of the common Lord of us all? By what right dost thou meddle with another's servant, who hath his own master, the very same that thou hast; by whose judgment, and not by thine, he must either *stand or fall;* that is, either be pronounced innocent or guilty?

If his master have not forbidden this which thou condemnest in him, it is presumption in thee to censure him; it is an injury both to the master and to his servant; an usurpation of an authority over him, unto which we can have no pretence; and therefore cannot be answered, either to God or to our neighbour, who are both wronged by such judging.

The same may be said of all other sorts of judging before mentioned; by which we give great offence both to God and unto man, towards whom if we have any regard, we shall hearken to the discourse of St. Paul, ver. 10, &c. of the same chapter, (where he puts both these reasons together:) *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ: for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every*

[1] Rom. xiv. 4.

knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.

We ought, that is, to examine ourselves strictly, particularly about the false, the rash, the causeless judgments we have passed upon others; for which we ought to call ourselves unto an account, and judge ourselves severely; and passing an upright sentence upon our actions, after we have laid them to the rule of Christ's laws, repent sincerely of what we have done amiss: (for that is the use the apostle makes of this doctrine in another place, *Now God commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, &c.*[m]) But as for other men, we must not be so forward as we are to pass our censures upon them; but in many cases leave them to our Lord, who only can pass a certain judgment upon their actions; he seeing their secret intentions, what was the spring of them, and the end at which they aimed: all which he will come again to examine, in the season proper for it, and make an exacter search than we can do, and be more impartial in his judgment than we are apt to be; and likewise *render to every man according to his work;* which is not in our power, though we were never so well inclined to it.

These things are sufficient, if duly pondered, to show the reasonableness of the apostle's injunction, *to judge nothing before the time.* And therefore I need not enter into the consideration, either of the causes from which this censorious humour flows, which are, arrogance, envy, hatred, ignorance, self-interest, and such like: or of the very mischievous effects of it, both upon the censurer himself, and upon those who are loaded with his censures. Whose spirits are hereby irritated, from whence proceed sharp contentions and dangerous disorders; and whose names are hereby blasted, their reputation and esteem in the world diminished; by which means they are rendered less capable to do the service they otherwise might have performed, either in church or state. For it gives a man a great advantage, in whatsoever place he be, to be well thought of in it, and to have a fair character: which whosoever spoils by his unjust or uncharitable censures is injurious not only to

[m] Acts xvii. 31.

him, but to the rest of mankind, who might have been benefited by his labours. This single consideration should make all those that have any sense of God to be more sparing of their censures than men generally are, that they are a great hinderance to men's doing good in the world; for which we were all born, and is the thing at which we should all aim in the several places where God hath disposed us.

But I have not time to set this vice forth in all these colours; and therefore what remains shall be spent in giving a few advices for the cure of this censuring humour; and some directions how to behave ourselves when we are unjustly censured by others.

I.

The advices for the cure of this distemper in those that are prone to it are three: the first hath respect to God; the second hath respect to ourselves; and the third to our neighbours.

I. First, if we thought more of this single principle of Christian religion, that *God will one day judge us,* we should be less prone to judge others; for this very thing will be examined and judged at that day, whether we have judged others falsely, unjustly, rashly, or hypocritically; and nothing can more directly move God to judge and condemn us, than such judgment and condemnation as we have sinfully passed upon other men. *My brethren, be not many masters,* saith St. James, (that is, be not forward to judge and condemn one another,) *knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation*[n]. Of which our blessed Lord himself puts us in mind. *Judge not, that ye be not judged*[o]. Where Grotius's note is, "I certainly resolve that the judgment of God is here meant." For it is the custom of our Saviour, to transfer things spoken of human affairs unto divine and spiritual concernments. And if so, then the sense of his words is this: 'Judge not your brethren, lest God judge you.' But *if a man be overtaken with a fault,* as St. Paul's advice is, *restore such a one with a spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*[p]. Let it be your work to strengthen the weak, direct the ignorant, and restore the lapsed with tender admonitions and gentle reproofs: but put no scorn, pass no severe censures upon them; for this God takes ill, as well as they. This is not

[n] James iii. 1. [o] Matt. vii. 1. [p] Gal. vi. 1.

to study to help your brethren, but to insult over them: it is to exasperate, not to reform them. It is highly offensive to God, who hath made it our duty to assist, support, and comfort others, but reserved judgment to himself; who will judge us the more heavily for assuming to ourselves his prerogative, not only because it is an insolence towards him, but a violation of that great law of charity; which is the *new commandment*, the *fulfilling of the law*, the *perfection of all virtue*. The breach of this, which is of such excellence, and such great use, must needs be a most hateful, most hurtful offence, and be most grievously punished.

Let us have this great day of judgment much in our minds, and it will keep all our passions in awe, particularly our anger and displeasure, which are too frequently a bias upon our judgments, and make them warp aside from truth and charity, and pronounce such sentences upon others as we cannot justify ourselves when we are in a calmer temper.

The constant thoughts of the day of judgment would always preserve us in such a temper, by keeping us humble, and maintaining an holy fear in us of offending the Divine Majesty by doing any wrong to others.

II. And it would be a further security to us, if we would let our thoughts dwell more at home, and there scan our own intentions and actions rather than those of other men. Here our proneness to judge and censure may find sufficient employment, without meddling with other men: nay, if we would thoroughly examine and condemn all that we find amiss in ourselves, we should be disposed to excuse or make apologies for them.

No other men can be so well known to us as we may be to ourselves; especially as to the thoughts and purposes, the designs and ends, which we propound to ourselves in all our actions. Particularly in our judgment which we pass upon others, we should do well to observe from whence such forward, and many times severe censures proceed; which we may be able to know a great deal more certainly than we can the faults of those whom we condemn.

And this self-reflection is never more necessary than when we are about to pass our judgments upon others. If at that time we could cast an eye upon ourselves, and consider who-

ther that very thing which we are going to condemn in them we are not, or may not be guilty of ourselves; whether, if we were in their circumstances, we might not, it is possible, do the same which we blame in them; it would lay a mighty restraint upon us, and put a stop to those forward motions we find in our hearts to censure others. For it is likely we shall find the same inclinations, if not the same distempers, in our own hearts and lives: and perhaps, in our own case, we call them by the name of infirmities; and therefore why should we give them a worse character in other men?

To conclude this: it is evident this will preserve us from judging others, both by diverting us another way, and by making us ashamed to do that in another case which we would not have done in our own.

While we look at other men's faults we are wont to neglect our own; and, in like manner, it is to be hoped we shall be detained from looking abroad by observing how things go at home. For here we shall find enough to do; and at last find it a more comfortable employment, as well as more easy; being both nearer at hand, and likely to do us as much good as censuring others doth hurt.

And if we will needs be finding fault with others, we may know the better how to judge of them by the observations we have made at home; where, I believe, we shall find that we do not love to pore (as we speak) upon our own faults or imperfections; from which we are apt to turn away our eyes, and not keep them long fixed on them. I am sure we are loath others should know them; and I fear we make excuses and apologies for them, nay, if we can with any colour, deny them. To be sure we will not easily nor hastily believe any ill of ourselves, and have very evident reason, before we conclude any thing against ourselves; which teaches us how to treat other men, in our opinions and censures of them; unless we will have one measure for ourselves, and another for them; which is so unjust, that we cannot for shame, if we attend to what we do, be guilty of it. Especially if, in the third place,

III. With respect to our brethren, we will always endeavour to possess our hearts with an unfeigned love and charity towards them all. This is, as I said, the great virtue of Christianity, the spirit wherewith our religion inspires us to love one

another, because God loved us; and as he loved us with such a kind of love which passes by and covers abundance of our failings, so should we be inclined to do by others. And if we be, this grace will preserve us from all rash, as well as false judgment of them; because *love worketh no evil*, as the apostle speaks: and this is none of the least evils, to condemn our brethren, when they are innocent; or before we be well informed about their fault; or with a design not to do good to them, or to others, but only to gratify our own bad affections.

Charity is a proneness and readiness of mind to do good to others, and therefore much more to speak well of them, that is, all the good we can; and not to publish all the ill we know of them, unless, as I said, to prevent others being infected or deceived by them.

Out of this blessed temper of mind we must not suffer ourselves to be beaten by any ill behaviour of others towards us, or their ill treating of us; but still retain a sincere love to their persons, whatsoever hatred we have to their vices. Which will dispose us to wink at many faults; to lessen and abate our resentment of others; to aggravate none; and to judge as favourably as we can of all. Except, as I said, where the common charity we owe to other Christians obliges to do otherwise; for sometimes it is a duty not only to reprove those that are faulty, but to *rebuke them sharply*[p] and with prudent charity, to let both them and others also know our opinion concerning them or their actions; which may be a means to amend them, and prevent the like guilt for the future, both in them and in others.

Thus if we behave ourselves, with a just fear of the judgment of God, with an impartial observance of our own actions, with an universal charity to all our brethren, we shall not easily break this precept of the apostle, and thereby provoke and dishonour God, reproach ourselves, and injure our neighbours.

Who will have just cause to complain of us, if we condemn them for every little difference there is in their opinions from ours. Of this we ought to take a special care, because we have seen the lamentable effects of it among ourselves; which shows us it is time to lay aside all our uncharitable thoughts one of another, and to forbear the heavy censures we have been prone to pass upon those who differ from us.

[p] Tit. i. 13.

We cannot indeed but judge some doctrines and practices to be very heinous, because they are against the express word of God: as image-worship, for instance, we cannot but call idolatry, because God himself hath so judged it. This is to judge according to God's law, and not against it, or beside it; but to say it is idolatry to pray by a form out of a book, or that it is superstition to wear a surplice, or such like things, is certainly a grievous crime, because it is to condemn that which God's law nowhere condemns. And on the other side, to pronounce all in general to be schismatics who cannot conform to every thing which we think reasonable, is, at least, rash judging; for perhaps their scruples arise out of mere weakness of understanding, prejudice of education, or a pious fear of offending God, by doing that in which they are not fully satisfied; or such like causes, which may excuse them before God of the guilt of schism, even when they live in it.

Charitable persons will consider the natural infirmity of all mankind, which God considers much more; the prejudices under which they are bred, the difficulty of shaking them off, the perplexities wherewith some things are entangled by designing men, the great variety there is in our apprehensions, the strength of our passions, the value every one of us sets upon his own opinion, our desire to have others of it, with a multitude of such like things; and upon these accounts bear one with another in matters that hurt not the faith of Christ, nor make us careless in Christian practice.

Here to pass peremptory sentences is highly presumptuous. For how come one sort of men by a right to judge, censure, and condemn all the rest? Why may not others take the same authority over them? And then there will be nothing but cursing and damning throughout the Christian world. For this kind of judging, you know, is come to such a height among some men, that they pronounce anathemas, and pass a sentence of damnation upon all those who in any thing believe otherwise than they do.

This is so contrary to the tender mercies of our Saviour; so destructive of the communion of saints; so injurious to the grace of charity, which hopes the best; so cross to the precept of Christ, *Judge not, that you be not judged;* such an enemy to the public peace, which is easily broken with those who are looked upon as no better than damned wretches; such a for-

getfulness of human weakness; so proud an usurpation of the Divine prerogative, and arrogant tyranny over another's servants; and, to say no more, so much against the very law of nature, (which hath made the understanding free, and not to be forced to submit to what it knows to be false;) that of all things in the world it is most unlike the Christian spirit, and will be so judged at the day of Christ.

But notwithstanding all our reasons and advices, there will be too much censuring and judging of all sorts, while the world continues as it is. Let us therefore see how we ought to behave ourselves when we are unjustly censured by others.

II.

And here I shall give as many directions as I gave advices.

I. First, we must watch ourselves, that we be not provoked by men's unjust or unkind censures to return the like censures upon them. To this we are very prone; for the most ingenuous minds have the greatest value for their reputation, and deeply resent the wounds that are given to their good name. If any thing will make them think their tongues are their own, and incense them to sharpen them like a sword, and be severe in their recrimination, this is the provocation. This whets men's invention to find out faults, as well as to aggravate them; and gives a sting to the words wherein they represent them, which presently turns censures into reproaches, and heightens reproaches into downright railing. St. Peter's rule therefore in this case must be observed in the very beginning of it, *Not rendering evil for evil*, (censure for censure,) *nor railing for railing*[q]. Which was exemplified in our blessed Saviour, *who, when he was reviled, reviled not again*[r].

He that returns censure for censure blows the fire already kindled, and inflames the passion into higher animosities; but who wisely forbears to recriminate, in effect extinguishes it. By governing his tongue and his passions, he both evidently proves himself a better man than his censurer, and also discredits all he says; nay, repels the reproach he cast upon him, so that it returns upon himself.

This is the very method the apostle St. Peter prescribes to baffle reproaches; not to return them, but to continue in well-

[q] 1 Pet. iii. 9. [r] 1 Pet. ii. 23.

doing: *For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*[s]. And again, ver. 16 of the next chapter, *Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evildoers, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

II. Secondly, the censures that are cast upon us, though unrighteous, should make us watchful over ourselves, lest we give any real occasion for them. There is excellent use to be made even of the judgment which an enemy passes upon us; insomuch that they who censure or reproach us out of hatred may thereby do us a kindness against their intentions. *Every way of man is right in his own eyes*, saith Solomon[t]. We are all apt to flatter ourselves; and our friends are apt to be partial also, or loath to tell us of our faults, either because they are afraid to offend us, or they are guilty of the same themselves. By which means it often comes to pass, that we have the first notice of our failings, not from them that love us, but from them that hate us: which, though meant ill by them, may prove very serviceable to us; for *open rebuke is better than secret love*[v]. We may profit more by the bold censure of our enemies than by the caution and reservedness of our friends. For whosoever is faithful to himself will so far mind the judgment of his adversaries, as thence to take occasion to reflect upon himself, to examine his heart and his ways, and, calling himself to a strict account, labour to amend what he finds amiss.

Have I not given some ground to this censure? Is not the reproach too true? Or if he that passes it be mistaken in this particular, might he not have found something else to censure, wherein I am truly guilty? Have I not been faulty in this very kind, of censuring others; if not faulty, yet rashly? Such questions as these we should do well to ask ourselves on such occasions; which naturally awaken us to self-reflection, and bid us stand upon our guard, lest by our negligence and remissness we not only incur the just censure of men, but even the judgment of God himself.

Which leads me to the last direction in this case, when we fall under unchristian censures.

III. Which is, to use special care to preserve our souls in

[s] 1 Pet. ii. 15. [t] Prov. xxi. 22. [v] Prov. xxvii. 5.

peace with God. This is the remedy St. Peter prescribes in a place much like to the forenamed; *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation*[u].

It is impossible for the best of men, in the midst of so many follies and enmities as reign among us in this world, wholly to escape all censure. John the Baptist was said to *have a devil;* Christ himself was deemed *a glutton, a winebibber*, and *a friend of publicans and sinners;* the apostles were *made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things*, as St. Paul tells us, ver. 13, below my text. Now if such men as these could not escape the censures nor avoid the reproaches of a wicked and mistaken world, by what reason doth any one of us expect to be free from either? And if it be folly in us to expect to escape them, what must we make our support and comfort under them, but the very same that they rested in as their satisfaction? Peace with God and our minds; a spotless conscience towards God and towards men. This we ought to study to the utmost of our power; and in this rest contented, or rather take full satisfaction. For this was the support in which the apostles found such consolation, that St. Paul says, *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world*[x]. The very same will also support and comfort us in every thing that befalls us.

If all be clear and bright within, nothing without can cloud and darken us. If we put on that armour of God, *the breastplate of righteousness*, it will secure us from all the arrows that are shot against us. If they scratch the skin, or perhaps leave a scar without, they shall make no wound within; their poison shall not reach the heart. Nay, they shall not set a lasting mark upon our name; but recoil, and fly back at last in the faces of them that shot them.

Peace with God is peace with the Sovereign of the world. Peace with him who is our Judge, the only Judge and Lawgiver, that is able *to save and to destroy*. And what is it to be judged and condemned of men, whilst we are absolved by the

[u] 1 Pet. ii. 12. [x] 2 Cor. i. 12.

great Judge of heaven and earth? Who will call our very judges to an account, and reverse their unrighteous sentences which they have passed, to their eternal shame and confusion; and to the eternal honour of those who have been abused by them.

Who in the meantime ought to suffer patiently, and have inward peace and quiet, comfort and satisfaction in their minds, in the midst of the clamour, the noise, the tumult, the dust, and the clouds which the folly and passion of men may raise about them: if their consciences all the time of this bustle do acquit them, and give them the testimony which St. Paul gave of himself, *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men*[y].

Let this be our constant *exercise*, and it will reward the pains we take in it with ease and rest: for *a conscience void of offence* will not be so much as disgusted at that which galls and sorely grieves those who are conscious of guilt. *Great peace*, saith the Psalmist, *have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them*[z]. For besides the feast which a good conscience continually makes them, they have the joys of hope, that God will one day not only clear them from all base imputations, but crown their innocence with eternal glory.

Which hope, as it ought to inspire us unto all worthy undertakings, so it ought to bear us up with courage and resolution in the pursuit of them, though they meet with ill interpretations, unkind censures, and vile requitals. That joyful day of the Lord will make an amends for all that we may suffer by the uncharitableness or ill-will of some, and by the folly or ignorant zeal of others; when he that knows the heart will say, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*[a]. Amen.

[y] Acts xxiv. 16. [z] [Psalm cxix. 165.] [a] [Matt. xxv. 21, 23.]

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF ST. JAMES'S,

BEFORE

HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

JANUARY 20, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

Isaiah xi. 6.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them, &c.

THIS chapter contains such an illustrious prophecy of Christ, and of the splendour and amplitude of his kingdom, that the greatest enemies of our blessed Saviour have not been able to shut their eyes against it. They all confess it is their great King, the Son of David, who, the prophet saith, *shall come forth as a rod out of the stem of Jesse*, &c. ver. 1, upon whom the *Spirit of the Lord shall rest*, in the greatest plenty and variety of heavenly gifts, (as it there follows,) to whose standard the Gentiles shall resort, ver. 10, *and his rest be glorious.*

Of this there is no question made: but they take exception to our Lord and Saviour, and will not allow him to be the King that is here foretold; because the whole prophecy, they fancy, was not fulfilled in him. For we do not see, say they, the wolf dwelling with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the kid, the lion eating straw like an ox, and the sucking-child playing upon the hole of the asp, &c., as the prophet tells us they shall do in the days of the Messiah: and therefore, he whom you worship is not that king of Israel unto whom we ought to yield obedience.

Unto this exception I shall endeavour at this time to give full satisfaction, and withal to explain the nature of Christ's

kingdom; by showing, first, the meaning of this prophecy, and secondly, the truth of it; or that it was exactly fulfilled in our blessed Lord and Saviour, who came to work and did effect this marvellous change in the world.

I.

And for the understanding of the sense of the prophecy, two things are necessary to be done:

First, to show what is meant by the wolf, the leopard, and the rest of the creatures here mentioned.

Secondly, what it is for them to dwell and lie down together.

1. The sottisher sort of Jews, who had rather any thing should be altered than themselves, have taken these words according to the very gross letter of them; and imagined that all the ravenous creatures shall change their natures when Christ comes.

But the sober men among them are sensible that the prophet by a parable of wolves and lambs, leopards and kids, lions and oxen, describes, as in a picture, such men as in their qualities and dispositions are like unto these creatures. Which is a scheme of speech no less familiar in the sacred books than in other authors.

Jacob, for instance, when he solemnly blesses his twelve sons, Gen. xlix., calls Judah *a lion's whelp*, because of the strength and fortitude, the courage and valour, which he foresaw would be in that tribe. And Dan he calls *a serpent and an adder in the path;* because of their subtilty and craft. And, to name no more, he says, *Issachar is a strong ass, couching down between two burdens*, ver. 14, because of their patience in labour, and suffering the heaviest loads of oppression to lie upon them, rather than stir to discompose their rest and quiet in that plentiful country which fell to their lot in the division of the land of Canaan.

But though they are content this prophecy should be a description of mankind, who, they see, are represented by such creatures as are here mentioned; yet their pride and vain opinion of themselves makes them to mistake the persons. For their conceit is, that they themselves are the lambs, the kids, and oxen, and we Gentiles the wolves, leopards, and

lions: which, if it were exactly true, would afford (as you shall hear anon) a most excellent sense of this prophecy.

But it is contrary to their own Scriptures, in which we find the greatest persons among them, their princes and judges, (that is, the men of the great sanhedrim, and they that judged in inferior courts,) compared, too often, unto the most rapacious creatures. They ought indeed to have been as gentle as lambs, as harmless as young kids, as innocent as a sucking child: but the prophet Zephany says in his days *their princes were roaring lions, and their judges evening wolves*, (the greediest of all others,) who, after they had eaten the flesh, presently gnawed the bones also[a], that is, they raked the very poorest of the people, who were already so bare that they were stripped to their skins, nay, to the very bones.

And after him Ezekiel makes the same complaint of their unrelenting cruelty, *Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, and get dishonest gain*[b]. And both these prophets, it is probable, borrowed this resemblance from the wise king of Israel, one of whose aphorisms is this: *As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over a poor people*[c].

In this condition our Lord Christ found the Jewish nation at his coming, as he plainly enough intimates, when, sending forth his twelve apostles to preach unto them, and them only[d], he saith, ver. 16, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep* (or as St. Luke hath it, *as lambs*) *in the midst of wolves.*

Under that character he represents those who had obtained the greatest reputation for sanctity among them, telling the Scribes and Pharisees they were *serpents, a generation of vipers*[e], who made a fair appearance without, *but within were full of extortion and excess*, or (as St. Luke expresses it) of *ravening and wickedness;* had a wolfish appetite, that is, being so ravenous, that they devoured even widows' houses, and never thought they had enough.

By this it is apparent, that, though the Gentiles were generally more savage than the Jews, yet they too often imitated their cruelty; and, notwithstanding their wholesome laws, which taught them better, were as oppressive and hard-hearted

[a] Zeph. iii. 3. [b] Ezek. xxii. 27. [c] Prov. xxviii. 15.
[d] Matt. x. 5. [e] Matt. xxiii. 25, 33.

as the most barbarous nations. And therefore, it is most reasonable by wolves, leopards, lions, asps, and such like creatures, to understand all men, of what nation soever, who are of a fierce and rapacious, a cruel and implacable nature: and by lambs, kids, calves, and others of that kind, all those who are of a more mild and gentle, tender and merciful disposition; that have no enmity to others, and do no hurt, but are useful to their neighbours, and inclined to do good to all.

This being very evident, there is no difficulty in the second thing to be explained, but we may easily tell what it is for these persons to dwell and lie down together.

Cohabitation, and resting in the same place, signifies friendliness, love, and constant kindness; the effect of which is mutual help, assistance, and comfort. And so the meaning of the prophet is, that such persons as were so full of hatred before our Saviour's coming, that they did not only contend and quarrel, but also worry and devour one another, should in the days of Christ become new creatures; and, laying aside their enmities and oppositions, their variance and emulation, their bloody strife and contention, live in such love and peace together as they are wont to do who dwell in the same house, that is, as brethren and sisters; or who lie in the same bed, that is, as husband and wife; between whom there is the strongest and dearest league of friendship.

This, I doubt not, is the general sense of the words: if there be any particular rank of persons designed by these several sorts of creatures, I can make no more of them than this; that by *lions*, in the better sense of the word, (as in the blessing of Judah,) may be meant princely persons, (as Epiphanius himself interprets that place[e];) and by the *fatlings*, their wealthy and happy subjects; by the *wolf* and the *leopard*, the strong and the mighty; and by the *lambs* and *kids*, the weak and infirm; by the *bear*, such as are fierce, rough, and warlike; and by the *cow*, the gentle, tame, and peaceable people; and lastly, by the *asp* and the *cockatrice*, (which are mentioned in the verses following my text,) the angry and envenomed spirits; and by the *sucking children*, all meek and good-natured persons.

[e] Hæres. 77. numb. 33. Διὰ τὸ τατον, ἀλλ' οὐ διὰ τὸ ἄλογον καὶ σχυρότερον τοῦ ζώου καὶ βασιλικὸ ἁρπακτικόν. [tom. i. p. 1027 C.]

And so the meaning may be, that Christ shall come to make the world so happy, that princes and people, the mighty and the meaner sort, the violent, and they that have no power or no will to resist, the soldier and the peaceable countryman; the waspish people, and they that are of a sweet disposition, shall all be brought under the same discipline, and submit to the same laws; not to hurt or molest one another, but to promote the common good of the whole body to which they belong. For they shall be conducted by the most tender hearted, peaceable, and gentle guides; who, perhaps, are meant in the latter end of my text, *and a little child shall lead them.* By this name of his *children* our Lord calls his apostles, whom he sent to gather and feed his flock; and both they and their successors are called in the holy language ἡγούμενοι, the 'leaders' of his people, to guide and conduct them into the way of truth and peace.

Thus far none can make any difficulty to yield their assent, but will easily grant this prophecy sets forth the happy days under Christ's kingdom and government, in such words as the very heathen poets (or prophets, as they call them[f]) were wont to use when they would represent the like peace and prosperity under their kings and princes. For Virgil congratulates to Pollio the birth of his son, and pretends to presage the happiness which should be in his time, in words as like to these of Isaiah as if he had borrowed them from his writings. And to ingratiate himself with Augustus, he speaks in the same style concerning Julius Cæsar, as all know who are acquainted with his poems[g].

The greatest difficulty will be to show the truth of what the prophet here writes, and to make his words applicable to our blessed Saviour.

For when were there such happy times? may some say. Did we ever yet see the enmities of mankind laid aside, or so much as laid asleep? Hath not even the Christian world been ever full of strife and contention, of hatred and bitter opposition, of violence and oppression, nay, of wars and bloodshed, which besmears the face of Christ's flock as well as other people? Do not our eyes still see men devouring and de-

[f] Tit. i. 12. [g] Eclog. iv. and v.

stroying one another? Are not our ears filled with the doleful complaints and lamentations of miserable wretches, the mighty in many places (even in neighbouring countries, not far off from us) roaring like lions for their prey, and poor harmless people trembling before them, like so many lambs that have no helper? Nay, are not the meaner sort engaged in perpetual brawls and endless janglings? Are they not fraught with envy, wrath, and malice? Do they not sting one another (and perhaps their betters) with bitter words, as if *the poison of asps were under their lips?* And more than this, are they not ready to sheath their swords in one another's bowels with such a furious zeal, as if to kill their opposites were to do our Lord good service?

How can all this be denied? and, if it cannot, what appearance of truth is there that Jesus is that Christ under whose government the prophet saith there shall be a most blessed accord?

I answer, all this is true; and yet it is as true that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Which is the second and the principal part of my discourse: wherein I undertook to demonstrate that this prophecy was exactly fulfilled in him: as will be confessed, if I make good these three things.

II.

First, that it was the apparent design of our Saviour's coming to make such an happy accord among men as the prophet here describes.

Secondly, that the nature of his religion is such as is apt to produce this effect which he designed.

Thirdly, that this effect was actually produced in those that heartily embraced his religion.

I. The first of these is so unquestionable, that I may be excused if I wholly omit it, for fear of being tedious. Or it may be sufficient to say, that as he was called by this prophet *the Prince of peace*[h] long before he was born, so at his birth the angels tell us plainly enough what his business was, when they welcomed him into the world with this joyful hymn, *Glory be*

[h] Isaiah ix. 6.

to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards, or among, *men* [i].

And when he was to enter upon his office, John Baptist was sent before him to prepare his way, *by turning the hearts of the fathers to the children,* (so the same angel describes his commission,) i. e. to make them all of one mind: *and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just* [k]. Which wisdom, you know, is *pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy,* as it is described by one of the apostles of our Lord [l].

Whose whole conversation in the world was such a rare pattern of meekness and peaceableness, that he *did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear his voice in the streets,* (as St. Matthew observes, ch. xii. 19, out of this prophet;) that is, he would not contend with those that opposed and provoked him; nor make a clamorous noise when he was abused; nor move the smallest disturbance, how ill soever he was treated: no, not so much as *break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;* i. e. dishearten, or utterly deject those of whom there was any hope; though, for the present, they were his enemies, and sought to destroy him. But he persuaded all in the most gracious manner to become new creatures, and sent his apostles abroad also upon this errand, with *peace in their mouths,* unto every house into which they entered.

And if you would know what kind of creatures he intended to make them, you may learn that even from the names he commonly bestows upon his disciples: whom he calls his *sheep,* and his *lambs,* and *little children,* (the very terms wherein the prophet here speaks,) unto whom he gave this new commandment, *that they should love one another, even as he had loved them;* that is, with the most ardent love, and sincerest affection. Which his beloved apostle repeats so often, and in the very same language, calling those to whom he writes *My little children,* as if he thought this was the whole business of Christianity, *that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment* [m].

But I will spend no more time in this, nor stay to give an

[i] Luke ii. 14. [k] i. 17. [l] James iii. 17. [m] 1 John iii. 23.

account of one place in the Gospel which seems to contradict it[n], because, whatsoever the event was by accident, in the attempt of so great a change as our Saviour came to make; the nature and genius of the religion which he taught is such, that as he could have no other design, so it is apt in itself to make men the most peaceable creatures, though never so disagreeing in their natural tempers and dispositions.

That is the next thing to be considered in this matter.

II. Which will be evident to every one's satisfaction, who will seriously weigh these three things:

First, the principles of his religion, or the doctrines he taught men to believe; together with the way and means whereby these principles were established in men's minds.

Secondly, the precepts of his religion, or the things he taught them to practise.

Thirdly, the obligations he laid upon men to receive these principles and observe these precepts.

All of which are very powerful to make men of a loving, gracious disposition, and perfectly to reconcile them one to another.

i. First, as to the principles of his religion, and the means he used to settle them in men's minds. He,

1. Taught them, first of all, that there is but one God. The disbelief of which, as it had set the world at such enmities one with another, as they confessed was among their deities; so the planting this faith in men's hearts, any one may discern at the first sight, must needs be an apt means to breed such love among men, as is between the children of one and the same common parent of them all.

2. And that is very considerable: as he declared one God to men, so he revealed him as his and their Father, full of kindness and goodwill to all his children, having a tender and affectionate care of their immortal happiness. Which St. Paul thought a bond so strong, and a motive so very efficacious, that it concludes the great heap of arguments whereby he persuades Christians to unity of spirit and peace; *There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*[o]; that is, the supreme Lord of us all, diffusing his

[n] Matt. x. 34, 35. [o] Ephes. iv. 6.

careful and paternal providence through the whole body of this vast empire, and more particularly resides among Christian people.

3. Who are taught (which is the next thing) to worship this one God by one Mediator alone; which is both another bond of union, (as the apostle there teaches, when he saith there is *one Lord* [p],) and likewise gives very great assurance of God's tender love to all mankind, as he discourses in another epistle [q], where he proves that God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth from this principle; *for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.*

4. Which appears by this further care he hath taken of us all, that he sent his apostles to baptize all nations into one simple faith, (for next to *one Lord*, the apostle mentions *one faith and one baptism*,) which is this, that there is one God, the Creator of all, who is to be worshipped and served by one Mediator, his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who offered one sacrifice, that is, himself, for the sins of the whole world, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and from thence sent the Holy Ghost, to testify that he is Lord of all, and will come again in glory to judge the quick and the dead. This was easily and quickly learned; and this they taught every where, that Christians might be *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment* [r].

5. In order to which they further declared the whole world should be governed and judged by one common law; and that not the law of Moses, but the plain rules of righteousness, sobriety, and godliness. For our blessed Saviour, being made Lord of all, abolished by his authority the ordinances of Moses; and thereby took away the distinction which had continued for a great many ages between the Gentiles and the Jews: whose law was, in the very intention of it, a law of division and separation; whereby God designed to sever them from the familiar society and conversation of the rest of the nations in the world: who, while that law remained in force, were kept at a distance from the Jews; but by the removal of it were *no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints,*

[p] Ephes. iv. 4. [q] 1 Tim. ii. 4, 5. [r] 1 Cor. i. 10.

and of the household of God[s]. Upon which account the apostle tells the Ephesians a little before, that Christ was *their peace, who had made both one, by breaking down the middle will of partition which was between them* and the Jews[t]; that is, as he explains himself in the next verse, *the law of commandments contained in ordinances*, i. e. the ritual constitutions of Moses, which he calls *the enmity*, because they had been the cause of enmity and hatred between Jews and Gentiles; and were therefore abolished by the death of Christ, *for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace*: that they, he means, who had stood divided by vastly different, nay, opposite rites of worship and other customs, might meet and join together in his religion; and so becoming one new body or society under the government of his laws, there might be a happy accord and agreement between them, as members of one and the same holy catholic church; the Jews no longer looking upon the Gentiles as profane, nor the Gentiles looking upon the Jews as an unsociable people.

6. Now for the settling this belief in men's minds, that they were all under the care of one and the same God, and of the same Mediator, and were become one corporation, by submitting to the same laws; they were all, both Jews and Gentiles, indifferently endued with *one and the same Spirit*.

This St. Paul frequently inculcates, especially in the forenamed Epistle to the Ephesians; where you read, presently after the words now mentioned, that through Christ they *both had access by one Spirit unto the Father*[u]. And again, *Ye also are built together in him for an habitation of God through the Spirit*[x]. The Holy Ghost, that is, falling down in great variety of wonderful gifts upon the Gentiles as well as the Jews, was an undoubted testimony of the same Divine favour towards them both alike, an evident token that the same Divine presence was among the Gentiles, which had been among his ancient people; and was likewise the bond of union, whereby they were knit together, without any distinction between them, unto one God, in the same religion of Jesus Christ. So the apostle tells them, chap. iv, where he requires

[s] Ephes. ii. 19. [t] Ephes. ii. 14. [u] Ephes. ii. 18. [x] Ephes. ii. 22.

them to keep *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*[y], because *there is one body and one Spirit.* They were all made members, that is, of the same society; and one Spirit moved and wrought in them all, which could not but dispose and incline them unto love and kindness, unto peaceableness and the strictest friendship imaginable.

Of this alone it would not be hard to make an entire discourse, and to show withal, that by the power of this Spirit only, and not by armed force and violence, his religion was propagated and advanced in the world, in a very quiet and peaceable manner. But my design is merely to represent what effectual means our Lord employed, had they been observed and pursued to bring about his end, and to fulfil this prophecy.

Which will further appear, if you cast your eyes a while upon his precepts, which is the second thing I propounded to be considered under this head.

ii. I will briefly mention some of them; for that will be sufficient to make you sensible of their efficacy if they were heartily obeyed.

1. First, exact justice; all the duties of which he hath comprised in so few, but very forcible words, that, as in an instant they enter into our minds, and gain our assent, and recommend themselves to our best affections, so they are easily remembered and preserved in mind. For *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them*[z], is a rule so pregnant, that it comprehends in it the wisdom of all laws; and so equitable, that it makes every man's own desires to be the measure of his actions towards others; and so powerful, that this alone, were it observed, would turn the whole earth into a paradise; in which the lions should be tame as lambs, and nobody destroy or hurt, or so much as molest others any more.

2. For this rule comprehends in it mercy also, which is another lesson our Saviour hath taught us, no less than justice. Which if men would exercise, as they desire it should be shown to them in their necessities, they would not merely cease to be hurtful to their neighbours, but become helpful and beneficial;

[y] Ephes. iv. 3, 4. [z] Matt. vii. 12.

and that in an extraordinary measure; for our Lord hath raised this virtue to the sublimest pitch, by requiring all his disciples *to be merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful.*

3. But suppose some to be so far from doing good, that they do nothing but mischief; and continue to be as unruly as the bears, and as spiteful as the asps, of which the prophet speaks in the next verses: in this case our Lord hath taught us meekness and patience, and would have us to suppress those angry and furious motions which are apt, on such occasions, to rise and boil up in our hearts. So that, notwithstanding the brutish nature of some, if the rest were generally possessed with the Christian spirit, the world might see more happy days than now it doth.

4. For he requires us also, not only to pass by and forgive those wrongs and affronts we receive from our enemies, but to bless them and to do them good. Which hath a strange power in it to charm and conquer even the most fierce and barbarous natures; and to reconcile them to the love of that virtue which makes men requite injuries with courtesies, even when it is in their power to take a terrible revenge.

5. Nay, further, he would have us *contented with such things as we have:* which evidently destroys that envy, emulation, and ambition, from whence no small stirs and confusions arise in the world.

6. In questions also and disputes about matters of liberty, he charges those that are satisfied not to despise such as are not; and those that are not satisfied, he commands not to judge those that are, Rom. xiv. 3.

7. Nay, in all manner of differences which are apt to arise among us, he would have *the peace of God rule in our hearts*[a]; so that this having the umpire there, and all being referred to its judgment, we should rest in the determination of what will make most for peace.

8. He instructs likewise our behaviour in our several relations, teaching husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, pastors and people, to demean themselves so to their mutual satisfaction, as to take away the cause of all discord, not only in families and parishes, but in the larger

[a] Col. iii. 16.

societies of church and state. When the flock, for instance, *know those which labour among them*, (as St. Paul discourses 1 Thess. v. 12,) that is, have a great respect to their spiritual pastors and instructors, whose faithful discharge of their office, in labouring among their flock, *presiding over them in the Lord, and admonishing them*, procures a great regard to them, and inclines the people to *esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake;* they cannot well miss of that blessing which there immediately follows, *to be at peace among themselves.* For from wise and faithful instructions on the one hand, and affectionate regard to holy counsels on the other, there cannot but issue such an accord, as will make them no less happy, than by their divisions they make themselves unquiet and miserable.

For, lastly, the root and foundation of all these our Lord hath laid in much humility and charity; which, as they are the very soul and spirit of Christianity, and utterly destroy that selfishness which is the great make-bate among men, so they are of such a sweet and obliging nature, that did they universally prevail, there would be an end of all impatience and wrath, jars and contentions, injustice and violence, cruelty and hard dealing; all factions in the state, and all schisms in the church, would either be prevented, or presently quashed and gently healed.

I need not distrust the evidence of these things so much as to add one word more about them.

iii. Let me only put you in mind, (which is the last thing under this head,) that this faith and these duties our Lord hath bound upon us by such strong obligations of his exceeding great and precious promises, and of his most dreadful threatenings, (which were confirmed also after a wonderful manner,) that if we laid them to heart, they could not fail to draw us as irresistibly to the belief of his doctrine, and to the observation of his precepts, as our obedience to them, it is certain, would make us all more happy than either these words of the prophet or any other can express.

Herein chiefly his doctrine excels that of the best philosophers, who taught many excellent lessons, but could not enforce them with such an assured hope of immortal life, or fear of eternal death, as our Saviour and his apostles have done: who

thunder this in our ears, *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*[b]. To be where our Lord is, and behold his glory, is the great hope of Christians, John xvii. 24: it is the very joy that is set before them. But they are out of the way to that high and holy place where our Lord is, and shall never come thither, who do not study to be pure and undefiled, and whose purity doth not make them peaceable; nay, *followers of peace*, and that *with all men*.

This is as sure as that Christ is in heaven; and we have as good security of that as can be given us, by the coming of the Holy Ghost from thence, in wonderful plenty of miraculous gifts; which declared him to have all power in heaven and in earth, and puts it out of all doubt that he is able to give to all them, *who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil*[c].

And now I hope no man will question the application of this prophecy to our Saviour, merely because he doth not behold such happy days as are here described; since things are so ordered, I have demonstrated, that we may see them if we will.

It is senseless to think that God intended to force mankind to agree together, and to be quiet, as if they were indeed a company of such beasts as the prophet here mentions, and not merely indued with such qualities. The prophet explains his own meaning, when, in the conclusion of this description of the peaceable reign of Christ, he assigns this cause of it: *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*[d].

This felicity was to be the effect of abundance of divine knowledge, which in its own nature is apt to produce it. But as no knowledge can be acquired without diligent studies; so, when we have it, it can do us no service unless we will be governed by it. And therefore, if men either will not enter-

[b] Heb. xii. 14. [c] Rom. ii. 7, 8. [d] Isaiah xi. 9.

tain this heavenly wisdom, or, having entertained it, do imprison and smother it, they deprive themselves of the blessing of peace: but they cannot make this word of God of none effect, because he never intended to bestow this happiness upon the ignorant and the negligent, but upon those who receive and improve the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So much the sober Jews themselves confess, particularly Maimonides[a], in these remarkable words: "The evils which men create one to another flow from their different opinions, persuasions, affections, wills, and studies; and all these spring from ignorance and want of wisdom. As a blind man not only stumbles himself, but runs upon others, because he sees not his way; so in every sect of men, they who are wedded to it do one another a world of mischiefs by reason of their blind ignorance: all which would be remedied if they had wisdom, which is to a man's soul what the faculty of seeing is to his body. When the truth is known, then hatred, envy, contention, whereby men tear one another in pieces, is at an end; which God himself teaches us by his prophet, who after he had first said, *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb*, &c. then subjoins the cause which should take away this enmity, and that is the knowledge of God the Creator, wherein men ought to be instructed: *They shall not hurt nor destroy*, &c., *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*," &c.

But the time calls me to hasten to the third and last general head, which is this:

III.

That the knowledge of our Lord was so fitted and so sufficient to make men thus happy, that there was actually to be seen such brotherly love and peace as is here foretold among the first converts to his religion, who embraced each other with such an hearty and fervent affection, that, what one shall rarely find an instance of between two single persons, might have been beheld in some thousands of men and women, who had but one heart and one soul in so many several bodies[b]; that is, were perfect friends, who had their possessions so common, that no man called ought of the things he had his own.

And if we list by these wild creatures in my text to under-

[a] More Nevoch. par. iii. c. xi. [p. 354.] [b] Acts iv. 37.

stand the Gentiles, it is evident they were in a little time brought to live in such unity, love, and peace with the Jews, that they maintained the communion of the saints in the most proper sense thereof: for they communicated their goods to them most freely and liberally when they were reduced to great straits in Judea, contributing to the relief of their necessities, not only to their power, but in some places *beyond their power, praying* St. Paul *with much entreaty, that he would receive their gift, and take upon him the fellowship of ministering to the saints*[c].

Many instances might be given of their frankness in their hospitality to strangers, whom they readily entertained, though they had never seen them before, merely because they belonged to the same body of Christ with themselves, and they looked upon them as their brethren. But I should transgress my bounds if I should pursue such like things any further, which deserve a discourse by themselves. And I have said enough to my present purpose, which was to show how completely this prophecy was fulfilled in the actual effecting of that which our Saviour designed, and for the producing of which he employed the most proper means.

From all which it would not be hard to find, had I time to make the inquiry, why those happy days in the beginning of our religion (when *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul*) were of so short continuance; and the days are long ago become exceeding evil. It is to be imputed in great part to the corruption of Christian doctrine, and the imposition of new articles of faith; or to the over-zealous espousal of such opinions as are no essential parts of it, (whereby men's minds have been diverted from the study of serious piety and virtue,) about which most of the heats and quarrels in Christendom have arose, and not about the substance of Christianity itself.

But it is to be hoped that the time is coming apace, when Christianity will end as it began, in abundance of truth and peace, by a right understanding of the will of God, and an hearty submission thereunto; in zealous love unto God our Saviour, and unto one another. Or, to speak in the prophet's

[c] 2 Cor. viii. 3, 4.

language, *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, (in the highest and largest sense of those words,) *as the waters cover the sea.*

I have not room to lay before you the grounds of this hope out of the holy oracles, but that wonderful work which God hath wrought in our days, and before our eyes, by that great prince, whose spirit he hath stirred up to undertake our deliverance from popish tyranny, and whose proceedings he hath blessed with amazing success, may well awaken the minds of considering persons to expect greater things he is about to do in the world, which groaneth (as the apostle says the whole creation did in their days) *to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Here at least, in these kingdoms and churches, it would be very strange if we should defeat the design of God's gracious providence, by continuing our old differences and enmities, our unchristian roughness and severities; frowardly refusing to close together in such an happy settlement as may give security to our religion and safety to all our other concerns.

This would set an eternal brand of infamy upon us, if, having all agreed so far with a common consent as once more to shake off the Roman yoke which was about to be put upon our necks, and to preserve the liberty of our country and of our religion in its purity and simplicity, we should now fall out about other matters, and suffer the few things wherein we differ to have a greater power to divide us than the many, nay, the most things wherein we agree have to unite us.

God forbid we should prove so ungrateful unto him, and unto the blessed instrument of his providence; which hath given us a new opportunity, after our shameful abuse of a former, to make ourselves happy *by being like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind: not looking every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*, as the apostle writes[d].

Unto this let every one who loves the Lord Jesus in sincerity, who hath any love to his religion and its honour, or loves his country, that is, his own ease and safety, and the welfare of his posterity, bend his serious study and most earnest

[d] Philipp. ii. 4.

endeavours. Let every soul of us do his part, that the place where he lives may be in peace; and not only wish, but labour, that the blessed times which we look for (when our Lord shall take to himself his great power and shall reign[e]) may begin here in these churches and kingdoms; where there never was greater need nor greater reason for unity than at this present.

Princes and governors should study this, by making just, reasonable, and merciful laws; and the people should study it, by a humble submission to them, and careful observance of them.

The ministers of the gospel should seek this, by being the ambassadors of peace and love, by speaking all the same thing; that is, preaching only the undoubted truths of the gospel: that so they may be one, (according to Christ's prayer for his apostles,) even as the Father and our Saviour were one; and thereby persuade men more effectually of the certainty of their doctrine. And all their hearers should study to adorn this gospel of peace, by learning of them in humility, and receiving the engrafted word with meekness; by setting themselves to the serious practice of plain and unquestionable precepts, and not quarrelling about doctrines that are uncertain and obscure.

They who are in office should endeavour this, by faithful execution of the known laws, by maintaining good order, by taking up petty differences among neighbours, which should be the work of every honest man, as far as it lies in his power.

The great and the rich should labour to bring on these happy days, by countenancing true piety, by comforting the poor and indigent, by all other acts of mercy and kindness unto those who are below them; that they may not be tempted to envy their prosperity, or murmur at their fulness and abundance; but be the better contented in their poor condition.

In like manner all other estates and conditions of men are obliged to discharge their several duties conscientiously, that they may contribute to the peace and quietness, the prosperity and happiness of the society whereof they are members.

For as there is no greater scandal than this among Christians, nothing more destructive to religion among ourselves, or a

[e] Rev. xi. 17.

greater hinderance to its propagation among strangers, than the perpetual differences and feuds, hatreds and enmities of which Christians themselves are the authors, so there is nothing more pernicious and deadly unto those who are embroiled in them.

If they have no greater respect to the credit of their religion than to continue still such animosities, they shall have this just punishment from God, that they shall thereby make one another so much the more miserable.

For when religion, according to its nature and design, doth not unite and bind men fast together, it makes them so much the sorer enemies one to another.

No differences so sharp as those among men of the same profession; none so cruel and outrageous as those whom religion sets a quarrelling.

And therefore let us heartily apply ourselves to the diligent study of that universal Christian piety, which will make us as innocent as lambs, as gentle as the young kids, as humble, void of malice, covetousness, ambition, or worldly designs, as the little sucking children. For this is the very intention of it. *The kingdom of God*, i. e. the Christian religion, *is not meat and drink*, (doth not consist in those things about which men quarrel,) *but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.* And *therefore let us* (as the apostle there exhorts) *follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another* [f].

Unto which give me leave to propound a few motives, not of my own, but out of one of the Greek fathers [g], who presses this upon the people of Constantinople when miserably divided, with equal zeal and eloquence.

First, says he, look up unto Almighty God, the highest and most excellent of all beings: who delights in the name of the *God of peace*, and hath taught his apostles to tell us, that *God is love*. Οὔτε γὰρ ἐν Θεότητι στάσις, 'for there is no commotion nor stirs in the Godhead;' but a perfect unity in that blessed Trinity.

And next unto God are the angelical powers, who are the first rays from the first light, and sparkle in no property so

[f] Rom. xiv. 17, 19. [g] Greg. Nazianz. Orat. xii. p. 108, &c. [ed. Ben. Orat. vi. § 12, 13. tom. i. pp. 187, 8.]

much as this: settled quietness, and freedom from contention and disturbance.

As for those angels who would needs raise a sedition by their discontent and ambition, they are fallen from their happy estate, and condemned to eternal darkness instead of light: the rest remaining still in their ancient dignity, the principal glory of which is peaceableness and unmovable love.

It follows therefore, that all they who embrace peace, and hate discord and contention, with all the causes of them, are Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων ἐγγὺς, 'nigh unto God, and unto divine beings.'

On the contrary, they who are quarrelsome and turbulent, the authors of division and makers of parties, glory in their shame, and are on the devil's side: who is always unquiet and uneasy in himself, and being from the beginning a murderer, and a hater of that which is good, labours to engage mankind in the like pernicious ways; hiding himself in the midst of contention and strife, and endeavouring, (as an army is wont to do when a few are entered,) by a little breach among us, to get in his whole body.

But let us come down from these heights, and cast our eyes a while upon the whole visible world, the heavens, the earth, and every thing therein: and take notice what a lovely sight it is, when every creature keeps its place, and observes its usual motions. Then it is a world indeed, according to its name, and an incomparable beauty.

I will not proceed in his description of it; but only add, as he doth, that when the earth quakes and is rent in pieces, when the sea breaks its banks, or the heavens pour down immoderate showers, how sad and dismal doth the face of all things appear! into what astonishment doth it cast us! But this proclaims peace and unity unto mankind: who ought to be affrighted by these disastrous accidents from tumults and confusions.

He desires them also to consider how all societies, great and small, are preserved and made happy by unity; and by division utterly destroyed.

And particularly propounds to them the example of the Jews; who brought upon themselves all these calamities, which are unexpressible, by their mutinous and seditious courses.

And lastly, he desires them to learn by their own dear-bought experience; which is a mistress that teaches even fools to be wiser. There being no greater shame, nothing more sottish, than for them to embroil themselves again, who are but newly escaped out of the flames, wherein they were almost consumed.

And he subjoins these two memorable observations, with which I shall conclude.

1. They are not the empty-headed people, as they are vulgarly esteemed, who continue constantly settled in one ill state; but they who are ever changing like the inconstant air, rolling like the waves of the sea, backward and forward, never knowing when they are well, nor where to fix, and how to settle themselves. Such men have no reason to expect ever to be happy; as they who continue in one bad condition it is possible may.

2. For that is his next observation; that even they who have been long in a state of faction and confusion have the hopes of agreement and peace left to comfort them, (for this is the support of the miserable, that better times may come at last.) But they who, being often brought to an accord, are so restless and unquiet that they fall out again, are deprived, together with the rest of their happiness, even of all hopes of agreeing in any settlement; dreading concord as much as they do commotion; trusting to neither, because of their fickle and discontented spirit in both.

From which wretched temper of mind and forlorn condition the God of peace and love of his infinite mercy deliver every one of us, for the sake of Christ Jesus, who is our peace. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

ON THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, 1689.

BEING A SECOND PART OF THE SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

IMPRIMATUR

Hen. Wharton, R. R. in Christo P. ac D. D.
March 26, 1689. Wilhelmo, Archiep. Cant. a Sacris Domest.

THE SECOND PART

OF A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

Isaiah xi. 6.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them, &c.

I HAVE already explained the prophet's meaning in these words; which is, that Christ should come to make those men who were at as great odds as the wolf and the lamb live in perfect love and peace together.

Of this there is no question, but only concerning the truth of this prophecy, which may seem not to have been fulfilled in our blessed Saviour; because we see as bitter enmities and as bloody contentions among Christians as among other people.

But though this be true, yet it is as true that our Saviour is the Christ, in whom this prophecy was accomplished; as I undertook to demonstrate from these three considerations:

I. That it was the manifest design of our Saviour's appearing to make such peace and reconciliation among mankind as is here described.

II. That the nature of his religion is such as is apt to produce this effect which he designed. And,

III. That it was actually produced in the first converts to Christianity who heartily embraced his religion.

Of the two first of these I have largely discoursed, especially

of the second. Wherein I showed that such are the principles of his religion which he requires us to believe, such the precepts which he recommends to our practice, and such the obligations he lays upon us to believe these principles and practise these precepts; that they could not fail of this end, to make peace among men, were they seriously considered and heartily entertained.

And that is said in Scripture language to be done by God, which he uses sufficient means, and gives us sufficient power to bring to pass; though the things should not be actually effected. For God doth not intend to keep us in order and peace like a herd of beasts, by penning us up and imprisoning us, (as we do lions and tigers,) so that it shall be out of our power to destroy and worry others; but he orders and governs us as reasonable creatures, who are to be restrained from doing hurt by the *knowledge of the Lord*, as the prophet explains himself, ver. 9.

If this enter into our minds, and be rooted in our hearts, it will alter our brutish natures, and chain up our furious passions; nay, so mortify and subdue them to the obedience of Christ, that we shall become new creatures, transformed into the likeness of our Lord and Master, by whose name we are called.

This is enough to verify what the prophet saith: as I could show by many unanswerable arguments, if it would not take up too much room in this discourse.

But to give a fuller and more evident satisfaction, I added the third consideration, which I could but lightly touch in the former sermon, but shall now more largely explain: and in conclusion add a fourth, which will expound this prophecy in the most literal sense that can be imagined.

To put it then out of all doubt that our blessed Lord is the Christ, who was to make *the wolf and the lamb dwell together*, let it be considered that as it was his intention to bring men to unity and peace, and as the nature of his religion is such as is apt to produce this effect, so this effect was actually produced in the first converts to his religion. All that were thoroughly indued with his divine knowledge became the most loving creatures in the world, and embraced one another with the most tender and sincere affection.

And here it will be fit to consider in the first place,

I.

How John Baptist, the forerunner of our Saviour (who came, as I told you, *to prepare his way*, and *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*,) began to work this happy reconciliation among men, and *make ready*, as the angel said he should, *a people prepared for the Lord*. For he *preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*[a], great multitudes, of all sorts of people, resorted to him, and with a common consent, obeyed his summons; even they who were as disagreeing in their natures and dispositions as those creatures that are here mentioned in the prophet.

The publicans, for instance, who were infamous for extortion and cruel oppression, being as ravenous as "evening wolves," (for that is the character Zeno[b], the comedian, gives of them, "All publicans are harpies,") were taught by him to be as innocent as lambs, by *exacting no more than that which was appointed them* in the public tables of rates. Unto which all that received his baptism gave their consent and engaged themselves; for he admitted them unto remission of sins upon no other terms, being far from flattering them with a false hope of finding mercy with God, if they did not cease their rapine and unmerciful dealings with men.

The soldiers likewise, men as fierce as leopards, and as rough as bears, were disciplined by him into a gentler nature; like that of the ox and the cow. For by receiving his baptism they submitted their necks to that yoke which he laid upon them in this comprehensive precept, *Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages*. Where he cautions them against their usual pillages, in extorting money from the people, either by threats and terrors, (as the first words signify,) or (as the next import) by pretended reasons; which, though never so false and absurd, it is in vain to dispute; as is wittily represented by Æsop in the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb, (by which Grotius illustrates this passage,) who came to drink at the same river. Where the cruel beast accused the harmless creature for spoiling his draught by troubling the water, when he drank his fill at the top of the

[a] Luke iii. 3.

[b] [Rather Xeno. See Meineke, Fragm. Com. Cyr. tom. iv. p. 596.]

stream, before it come down to the innocent lamb who stood below, &c.

The people also were taught this lesson when they came to his baptism, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise;* that is, let not others perish by want, when you have more than needs. A most admirable and easy measure of charity, to help others without hurting ourselves, to provide for their extreme necessities out of our superfluities.

Unto which it is to be supposed they also consented when they were baptized, (that is, made profession of repentance,) as vast numbers of them were. Insomuch that *many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to his baptism,* against whom he cries out as *a generation of vipers;* who had hearts as full of rancour and malice as the viper is of poison; no less venomous than the asp and the cockatrice mentioned in this prophecy: and yet were so terrified at his preaching that they humbled themselves to his baptism, and there disgorged their venom by confessing their sins, and engaging (for it was not a bare acknowledging, but a renouncing them) to amend their lives according to his doctrine.

All this you may read in the third of St. Matthew and St. Luke; where they show how the whole nation flocked to him for advice, what they should do to *flee from the wrath to come;* and were instructed by him to prepare themselves, by such means as these now mentioned, for the kingdom of Christ, which he told them was approaching.

II.

Now what was thus begun by him was further promoted by our blessed Lord and Saviour as soon as he appeared; when he taught all his disciples whom he admitted, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*[b], that is, be made my subjects, and be partakers of their happiness. Accordingly, all that professed subjection to him in sincerity had their hearts thus converted and changed into that blessed temper of spirit which he infused into his disciples in his sermon upon the mount. Where he taught them to be humble, contented, tender-hearted, meek,

[b] Matt. xviii. 3.

merciful, peace-makers, pure in heart, patient; to lay aside all anger, lust, revenge, and whatsoever it is that troubles the world. And you read in the conclusion, that *the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority*[c], or, as St. Luke expresses it upon another occasion, *his word was with power*[d]; having, no doubt, such effect as to work these qualities in many hearts; whereby their natures were altered, and turned into the similitude of their Master, the Prince of peace; who in his lifetime employed his twelve apostles in the same blessed work, of making peace among men; and compares them to lambs, when he sent them to preach in Judæa; which he tells them was to send them among a company of wolves. For men of such spirits there were then in that nation; some of which notwithstanding were converted, and brought to live with them in a peaceable subjection to the government of the Lord Jesus.

III.

But this work was completed when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost; when some thousands of Jews and proselytes of several nations were converted, not merely to believe on Christ, but to live in the dearest love and kindness one with another. So you read in Acts ii. 44, 45, *And all that believed* (who were three thousand converted at the first sermon they preached) *were together*, that is, lived in perfect unity, *and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need;* that is, they did not barely abstain from *hurting and destroying* one another, (as Isaiah here saith they should, ver. 9.) but were so kind as to do good and impart to each other, as their own abilities afforded, and their neighbours' necessities required.

And this not for a fit only, but *they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*[e], that is, with charity and liberality unto others whose wants called for their assistance. For so a *single eye* signifies[f], a charitable frank disposition. And accordingly so a single heart is to be here interpreted: a mind free from covetous selfishness, purely bent to do good to

[c] Matt. vii. 29. [d] Luke iv. 32. [e] Acts ii. 46. [f] Matt. vi. 22.

others, and that with cheerfulness: which was the thing that *gave them favour with all the people*, as it there follows, ver. 44.

IV.

Nor was this the effect of Christianity in those only that first received it; but you may observe, the same spirit continued in those that afterwards embraced it. For at the next great conversion which was made of disciples to Christ, you find that they being all filled with the Holy Ghost, *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul*[g]. In which was punctually fulfilled this prophecy of Isaiah: for though they were never so different in their principles and affections before, now they were so reconciled and united, as if there had been but one heart or spirit in such a great multitude. And it is observable, that this change was wrought *in the holy mountain of God* (as the prophet predicts, ver. 9,) *at Jerusalem*, where the gospel was first preached; and had this admirable effect in those that entertained it, to make them conspire together for their common good, as if they had been but one man. *For none of them said that ought of the things he possessed was his own*, but they had all things common, (as it there follows,) *neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man as he had need.*

V.

After this indeed, *when the number of the disciples was multiplied*, (as the text speaks[h],) *there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* But as this only signifies, that in such a great company of Christians of which the body of the church was made up, there were some so imperfectly instructed that they retained some partiality of spirit, and were too much inclined to favour particular persons, out of their near relation and peculiar affection to them, because they were their countrywomen, born in Judæa, which the Grecians (though Jews) were not; so this very thing occasioned a

[g] Acts iv. 32. [h] Acts vi. 1.

greater unity, by the provision of a speedy and most excellent remedy, which silenced these murmurings for the present, and prevented them for the future. For the people are directed to find out seven persons from among themselves, *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost* and wisdom, whom the apostles might appoint to attend upon this business.

And it is very remarkable, that as this proposal *pleased the whole multitude,* so they all agreed by a common consent to make choice of Grecians only (as appears by their names, ver. 5,) for this employment; who could not be suspected of any want of tenderness for that party which had been aggrieved. And accordingly after this, we hear of no more complaints about such matters; because all men's necessities were considered by these excellent persons with an equal respect and fatherly care, to the general satisfaction both of those who were born in Judæa, and those that were born in other countries.

And thus far you have seen only what concord there was among those Jews and proselytes who were converted to Christianity.

VI.

But now if we proceed to consider what an happy agreement there was among Christians, when the church was enlarged so far as to take in the whole Gentile world, it will convince every one that this prophecy was exactly fulfilled.

I. At the first opening of the door to let the Gentiles into the fold of Christ, it must be acknowledged that for a little space there was some strangeness, though no enmity, in the converted Jews unto the Gentile Christians. They could not be persuaded to converse familiarly with them, much less to believe that the Gentiles should be made partakers of the very same happiness with themselves; but they would have confined the blessings of the Messias to their own nation, or to their rites of religion.

The apostles themselves were possessed with this opinion at the first, by reason of the narrowness of their minds, which were by degrees enlarged to contain more of the knowledge of the Lord. For as soon as a more full discovery was made to them of the will of God, immediately all their shyness in conversing with the Gentiles vanished, and they most joyfully

closed with them to make one body, which edified itself continually in love.

This discovery was first made to St. Peter, who was sent (as you read Acts x.) to preach unto Cornelius and other Gentiles, by a voice that came to him from heaven in a vision, wherein he saw *all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts,* &c., and was bidden to eat of them indifferently, and no longer to *call that common which God had cleansed;* that is, as he afterward understood the meaning, not look upon the Gentiles as unclean creatures; who were no longer to be avoided as wolves and leopards, and such like beasts, but be made the sheep of Christ. For the wild beasts as well as the tame were all comprehended in that sheet which St. Peter saw in the vision let down from heaven to the earth.

And therefore immediately upon this he went and preached to the Gentiles; and the Holy Ghost falling on them, even before they were baptized, stopped the mouth of all gainsayers, and perfectly silenced the Jews who had before disputed against all society and conversation with them. So you read Acts xi, where you find, ver. 2, *they of the circumcision contended with Peter, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them,* &c. But when he had expounded to them the whole matter in order from the beginning, (i. e. told them what instructions he had received from heaven, whereby more of that divine knowledge which Isaiah here speaks of was communicated to him,) *they held their peace,* saith the story, ver. 18, and more than that, *they glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;* that is, they owned them for the children of God as much as themselves, heirs of the same promises of life and bliss, and accordingly laid aside their strangeness, and made no difference between themselves and those whom they had looked upon as unclean, and utterly unfit for their society.

II. And as the Jews were thus reconciled to the Gentiles, so were the Gentiles (I think I may say much more) reconciled to the Jews, though they had treated them formerly as unclean creatures.

1. This appears from their unheard of charity towards the Jews when they were in necessity, which was the highest proof of a disinterested affection. It would take up too much time to

enumerate the places where we read of the collections which were made for the poor Christians in Judæa, in all churches of the world which St. Paul planted, who himself sometimes was at the pains to carry their alms to Jerusalem. According to an agreement made between Peter and him, when the one went to preach to the Jews, and the other to the Gentiles, they took one another by the hand to confirm this agreement, and the only condition was, as St. Paul tells us, *that we would remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do*[l]. I gave you a famous instance of it in the churches of Macedonia, who when they were in great affliction themselves, and in *deep poverty*, (as St. Paul's words are,) *yet abounded in the riches of their liberality: for to their power, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift*[m], &c.; which is a wonderful example of that noble and high generosity of spirit which Christianity infused into them; little less marvellous than if one should see an hungry lion or wolf become so tame and tender-hearted as to feed a feeble lamb. For they were extremely poor themselves, and yet contributed to the more pressing necessities of their unknown brethren. Unto whom they not only made a free willing offering of their own accord, and with abundance of joy, but beseeched the apostle to receive it, and that with much earnestness, as if it had been a favour to be admitted to give help to others; the greatest benefit to themselves to be beneficial to their brethren.

2. Besides this their hospitality was wonderful; which consisted in receiving strangers whom they never saw before, when they had occasion to travel from one country to another[n]. If they brought testimonials along with them that they were Christians, they were freely entertained in foreign parts, and there provided for as members of the same body with that church to which they came; who did not look upon them as strangers, but as friends, whom they treated with all imaginable kindness. This, no doubt, was one of the things that made the heathen say, "Behold how these Christians love one another!"

3. And it is further observable, that there were certain persons who devoted themselves to the service of such people,

[l] Gal. ii. 10. [m] 2 Cor viii. 2, 3, 4. [n] Rom. xii. 13.

washing their feet when surbated or heated with their travels, attending on them in their sickness, and wholly employing themselves in such like charitable offices; which demonstrated there was one spirit that acted the whole body, and made all the Christian world one communion. I have not room for all the places where these things are recorded; but you may read this plainly enough, where Phœbe it appears was such a person, *a servant of the church of Cenchrea*[o]*:* i. e. one who ministered there to the sick, and to the poor, and had succoured many, even St. Paul himself, as he there acknowledges to her great honour. For the word he uses signifies more than a mere succourer or helper; no less than a patroness of him and others, whom she had in a generous manner entertained out of her own estate, and therefore upon that account is recommended by him to be kindly treated by the Roman Christians.

4. There were whole colleges of pious widows who devoted themselves to such services, as those mentioned in 1 Tim. v. 10, *bringing up children, lodging strangers, washing the saints' feet, relieving the afflicted, and diligently following every good work.* Which kindnesses were more especially shown to those who were banished their own countries, or despoiled of their goods, and lost their friends for religion sake. Unto whom the promise of our Saviour was by this means literally made good, *Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, &c., for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life*[p]. For every country was their own country; every man's lands were at their service; for every house they lost upon our Saviour's account, they had hundreds of houses to which they might resort. For every Christian's house was their house; every one that belonged to Christ was a brother and a sister to them; and many treated them with such care and tenderness, as if they had been their own children.

And thus the words of Isaiah were exactly fulfilled also;

[o] Rom. xvi. 1, 2. [p] Mark x. 29, 30.

that people between whom there had been anciently the greatest strangeness, or rather antipathy, were now brought to such a familiarity, that wheresoever they met they dwelt together in one another's houses, and there received such a hearty welcome as if they had been domestics, born and bred up in that family which they had never seen before. By which means also the gospel was marvellously propagated, as is observed by Julian himself: who takes notice of this entertaining strangers as a most obliging virtue, wherein Christians quite outdid heathens, (who practised no such thing,) and gained ground upon them every where.

III. It must be confessed indeed, that after God had thus *opened the door of faith to the Gentiles*, (as St. Luke writes, xiv. 27,) there did arise a controversy, which for some time disturbed the peace and quiet of those churches which were planted among them; but it was admirably composed by the wisdom and authority of the apostles.

Some of the Christians in Judæa, who were imperfect in the knowledge of the gospel, (which must be diligently noted, because where men were fully instructed there was no contention about such matters,) went abroad and preached, that though the Gentiles did indeed belong to the kingdom of Christ, and should be made one body with them, yet they must be circumcised, and tied to observe all the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law. Nay, they carried it so high as to say, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved* [q].

They had the same opinion which the Jews are of at this day, that the reconciliation of the world one to another should be brought about by uniting all nations in the Mosaical religion. Thus Maimonides expounds the words of this prophet, as if by *the lion's eating straw like an ox* (in the verse following my text) were meant the Gentiles eating only clean meats, and abstaining, as the Jews did, from all those creatures prohibited by the law of Moses as unclean.

About such matters as these *Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them*, ver. 2, that is, laboured to convince them (as we find by many arguments he uses in his Epistles) that all the world was to be made one; not

[q] Acts xv. 1.

by the observing their law, but by the abolishing it, because it was, in truth, a wall of partition and separation between them and other nations. Of which they could not be persuaded presently, popular errors being very hard to be rooted out; and this was one of the chief: which had so deeply rooted itself in the hearts of that nation, that such as were become Christians still retained it, and, through a partial ignorance remaining in them, stiffly maintained that Moses' law was to stand for ever, and that all mankind must submit unto it, or be shut out of the kingdom of Christ.

With this unreasonable conceit they infected some of the Gentile churches, though these things following were most evident.

First, that the law of Moses was given to that one nation alone, and to be the law of that one land and country alone, and no other; and this to keep them from the idolatrous customs of the people round about them. All this is apparent from the law itself, where you read, that circumcision (that great distinguishing mark) was established to be observed by *Abraham and his seed in their generations*[r], and that other laws are appointed, a statute *throughout their generations*[s]: and this only in that particular land or country, *I have taught you statutes and judgments, that ye should do so in the land whither you go to possess it*[t]. And again, ver. 14, *The Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it.* And for this end alone, that they might be *a holy people* to him, that is, separated from other nations, and thereby preserved from their wicked customs. The places that mention this are so obvious, that I need not recite any of them: and it is apparent enough from those now named, that all nations were not concerned in those laws, but only the Jews, and they only in the land of Canaan, not in other countries, where they could not keep them. As the Jews themselves find by experience at this day, in the several countries where they are dispersed; in which they cannot observe all the laws and customs which they were bound to observe there.

Secondly, and indeed it is impossible that all those laws

[r] Gen. xvi. 7, 9. [s] Levit. vii. 36; xxiv. 3. [t] Deut. iv. 5.

should be observed by the whole Gentile world, or by any that live in countries much distant from Judæa. For how should they go up three times a year to worship at Jerusalem, (as all the males among the Jews were bound,) who live so far off from thence, that it would require a whole year to make one voyage thither? And how should women for their purification after childbirth, and lepers for their cleansing, bring their offering unto the priest, to be presented by him *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*[u]? Such things as these demonstratively show the law of Moses was local, that is, determined to a particular country.

Thirdly, but if it were possible to observe that law, yet it would be unnecessary; because the reason of it is ceased by the coming of Christ; who, having abolished that idolatry which occasioned the law, might very well abolish the law itself, whose end was to keep them from the manners of those nations which are now destroyed.

Fourthly and lastly, it was far more reasonable that one nation should conform to the common law of all the world, than that all the world should be constrained to conform to the law of one nation. Especially since their law was arbitrary, depending wholly on the will of the lawgiver, having no natural goodness in its precepts. But the laws of Christ are little else than the plain dictates of reformed nature; such as all mankind, if they were themselves, would choose to observe, though Christ had not given them.

Such reasons as these, no doubt, satisfied the wisest and best Christians; and as for the rest, the apostles took an admirable course to compose the differences they had made in the church, by that most prudent decree which we read in the same Acts xv. 20, 28, 29, that the Gentiles, to maintain peace and unity with the Jews, should for the present abstain from a few things which were most offensive to them, particularly *eating blood, and things strangled;* which was no great abridgment of their liberty, and therefore the Gentiles cheerfully consented to it, because they saw it would be an effectual means to settle them in quietness and peace.

For this decree being first sent to the Christians of Antioch, where the controversy began, they *rejoiced for the consolation*[x]. And being afterward delivered to every church where

[u] Levit. xii. 14. [x] Acts xv. 31.

the apostles travelled to preach the gospel, *so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily*[y]; that is, they were settled in the right belief, that none of those things were necessary which the Jews urged them to observe, (save only for peace sake;) and by that means a great many other Gentiles, finding no such burden should be laid upon them, came and joined themselves to the Christian society.

It is true, some of the Jews still made a disturbance, as we may guess from some passages in St. Paul's Epistles: but they were dreadfully confuted by the destruction of the temple and whole commonwealth of the Jews; which made it impossible for them to observe all the rites and customs for which they contended, though they were in Judæa; and laid this controversy asleep, or rather dead, among the Gentiles for ever.

You will say, perhaps, that other questions and differences arose which troubled the church. And it is confessed, that the apostles themselves complain of some unreasonable and absurd men, who taught perverse things; and also foretold, that after their decease *grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock*[z]. But still by their care and authority the main body of the flock of Christ were kept in perfect peace and quiet; or differed more in some opinions than in their affections. And after their departure out of this world they so continued, under the conduct of apostolical men, who watched over their flocks with such diligence that those wolves did little hurt; all that sophistry being powerfully baffled by them, wherewith those pestilent men subverted some weak minds, and drew them into their senseless heresies. For, as St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, it was needless to write to them touching brotherly love, because *they themselves were taught of God to love one another*[a]; so it is reasonable to presume the same of the generality of all other Christians in those days. And in the following ages their love, as I observed before, notwithstanding some sects among them, was so notorious, that it set a mark upon them, (as Tertullian speaks[b],) and made the heathen say, "See how they love one another." For the heathen were not more prone to kill those whom they hated, than the Christians were to lay down their own lives for to save their brethren. So they called one another, as he says,

[y] Acts xvi. 4, 5. [z] Acts xx. 29. [a] 1 Thess. iv. 9.

[b] Apolog. c. 39. [p. 31 B.]

in his days, having all one Father, being born again in one laver of regeneration, and drinking of one spirit of holiness, (as his words are,) which inspired them with such charity, that they were kindly affectioned towards the most froward and peevish people; and, as St. Austin tells the Donatists, whether they would or no, looked upon them as their brethren.

Thus, I may presume, I have sufficiently proved how peaceable and quiet the kingdom of Christ was, when he first began to reign: what a marvellous change he made in the world: how he reconciled their enmities, and made them deposit their hatreds: inclined them to embrace one another with such an unusual affection, and to take such a care of each other's welfare, that it made the Christian society to be admired by those who were not of it; and invited great numbers, in the most dangerous days, to enter into it.

That things did not continue in this blessed state so long as might have been expected, is to be imputed to those *vain talkers* who perverted the plain, simple doctrine of Christ, and turned it into *another gospel;* till at last there was such a foul apostasy as we now see in the church of Rome. Where great numbers of Christians are become wolves, leopards and tigers again; who for many ages have ravaged and devoured the harmless lambs of Jesus Christ. For a most beastly cruelty entered into the church, together with a profound ignorance; according to the observation of the Psalmist, (which will ever be true,) *The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty*[c].

For the first three hundred years and more there was not the least sign of a persecuting spirit; though there were such horrid opinions then vented as have not been heard of in these later times. But Christians, being then wholly unacquainted with force and violence one towards another, beat them down with spiritual weapons; by which they maintained the faith of Christ in sincerity, and got a glorious victory over those monstrous heresies. Impositions upon men's understandings, and forcing their belief, or at least the profession of articles of faith, by inflicting corporal punishments merely for false opinions, came in with the retinue and train of antichrist; that is, crept into the church, as other abuses and corruptions did, when the

[c] Psalm lxxiv. 20.

first warmths of Christianity were abated, and *the charity of many was waxed cold.*

But as this was foretold by our blessed Saviour and his apostles, so they assure us, that the lofty pretences of this apostate church shall one day be thrown down: and that with the destruction of this mystical Babylon the Christian world shall be renewed. *A new Jerusalem shall come down from heaven,* (as St. John saith, Rev. xxi. 3, 4,) *and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, &c.; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying,* (or *bawling,* as the word signifies,) *neither shall there be any more pain,* (or *toil* rather, and *drudgery,*) *for the former things are done away;* that is, oppression and cruelty shall be strangers to this church; there shall be no haling men to the stake; no lamenting over those that are butchered; no bawling Away with them, they are not worthy to live; no condemning men to the galleys; no painful tugging at the oars, and such like barbarities; but Christians shall live at ease, and be so kind one to another, that there shall be nothing but joy in God, and in their mutual charity; for, in one word, former things, such as we now see, shall be so banished from the Christian world, that they shall be known only by hearsay.

I cannot now further enlarge upon this, because I have one thing more to add for the explication of this prophecy, which as it will answer the most literal sense of it, so is very suitable to the present season.

IV. The grosser sort of Jews, I told you in the beginning of this discourse, would have us understand by wolves, leopards, and lions, &c., the very beasts that bear these names; which in the days of Christ they fancy shall become tame, and made as gentle and familiar as those we call oxen, calves, and lambs. There is great reason, I showed you, against this interpretation; but if any be so stubborn as to stick to it, and will not believe unless we show him when this was done, I think it is not difficult to give him satisfaction.

For St. Mark tells us, that when our blessed Saviour was in the wilderness forty days tempted of the devil, (of which St. Matthew gives us a larger account in the Gospel for this day,) *he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered*

unto him[d]. The devil, that is, attempted to affright him with such terrible creatures as the lions, wolves, and tigers, which are greedy of man's flesh as well as of other creatures; but none of these had any power to annoy him. Quite contrary, they all licked his feet, (as I may speak,) and were as innocent and as gentle as the lambs. For that must be the sense of these words, (*He was with the wild beasts,*) he was in the midst of them, and that without any harm at all; they being as mild in his presence as those we count the meekest creatures.

In this the power of our Saviour began to discover itself to the devil, who saw this prophecy literally fulfilled in him, *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb*, &c., and that of the Psalmist in Psalm xci. 13, *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.*

Yet such is the bold and restless nature of the tempter, when he could not terrify him by this horrid company of wild beasts, he had the confidence to hope for an advantage from hence another way. For he imagined our Saviour himself would take the confidence by this authority and power which he found he could exercise over those fierce creatures, to presume to do some other strange thing without the same reason; especially when Scripture might seem to encourage to it, even that very Scripture which I now named.

Accordingly the devil takes our Saviour into the holy city, and sets him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone*[e]. If you inquire where this is written, the answer to it will acquaint you with a thing very remarkable. For it is written in the same psalm where you find the other words I now alleged, *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder*, &c.; and, the truth is, goes immediately before them in this manner, *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou*

[d] Mark i. 13. [e] Matt. iv. 6.

shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet. Now they being thus connected and knit together, our Saviour durst not separate them, as men in these days are bold to do with the holy Scriptures. Which he understood so perfectly, that he could not be cheated with the devil's sophistry; for he knew the psalmist was to be thus expounded, (as an eminent divine of ours hath long ago observed[f],) "that the angels should keep him if he trod upon a lion or an adder as they came in his way in the wilderness, as well as bear him up that he should not dash his foot against a stone." And so they did, for the angels ministered unto him while he was with the wild beasts, upon whom if he had trod it had been no tempting of God; because he had promised to send his angels to guard him from harm in that action. But they had no such commission that he could find to keep him if he cast himself headlong from the pinnacle of the temple; for it was no part of his way, as it was to be in the wilderness whither the Spirit carried him. Nor was it a thing included in this promise, which signifies only thus much, that all creatures should be obedient unto him, and though never so fierce and virulent in their own nature, should lose their power and their poison in his presence.

Thus, I think, the words of Isaiah were in the most literal sense of them made good to the full.

And it may be observable, perhaps, that as this prophecy in my text immediately follows a prediction, that Christ the Branch of the stock of Jesse should be filled with the Spirit; *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel*[g], &c.; so our Saviour's being with the wild beasts immediately followed after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him at his baptism, as the three first evangelists tell us who write about this matter. Particularly St. Mark in the place before-named saith, *Immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness;* that is, as soon as ever he was baptized, and the Holy Spirit with a voice from heaven was come down upon him, he was led by the Spirit into desert places, *and there he was with the wild beasts*[h]. And then came to pass what Isaiah had foretold, that

[f] Doctor Jackson. [Commentaries on the Creed, book vii. vol. vi. p. 422.]

[g] Isaiah xi. 2, 3.

[h] Mark i. 12, 13.

there was no difference between a lion and a lamb, a leopard and a kid, an asp and a sucking child; but they were all alike subject to our blessed Lord and Saviour.

There is one objection that may be made against what I have said, which seems to lie against the very intention of our Saviour; which was not, may some fancy, to make peace in the world: but he himself saith, *I came not to send peace, but a sword;* I am come to *set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother*[h]. Or, as St. Luke's words are, *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division*[i]. This I thought good to mention; though such passages, I hope, are now so well understood, that a short answer will serve to it. For,

First, it is evident from plainer places that our Lord did come to send peace; and he was not so weak as to contradict himself. What can be plainer than those words of his, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give*, or commend, *unto you*[k]?

Secondly, and on the other side, it is as manifest he intended nothing less than to bring a sword, and to make war: for he forbade his disciples to *take the sword*, and commanded them to pray for their enemies, not to kill them.

Thirdly, therefore he cannot be thought to speak of his intention, (when he saith, *I came to send a sword*, or division,) but of the event of his coming by accident. Just as we say when we give a friend a visit out of mere kindness, "I am come to trouble you;" not that we design any trouble to him, but are afraid it may prove so at that time, if he be otherwise engaged; in like manner doth our Saviour say he came to bring a sword, and to make variance: not because he would have it so, but because he foresaw many men were so much inclined another way, and so strongly engaged in other persuasions, that they would not only refuse his religion, but quarrel with them that received it.

This was the division he speaks of: they who did not become Christians, he knew would hate and malign those that did, and that a great deal more than if they had remained still heathens or Jews. Which was not the drift or the effect of his doctrine, but proceeded from their ignorance of it, by refusing to entertain it; nay, wilfully shutting their eyes against

[h] Matt. x. 34, 35, 36. [i] Luke xii. 51. [k] John xiv. 27.

that light of Divine knowledge which *filled the earth as the waters cover the sea.*

To be brief: this only proves what I discoursed in the former sermon, that mankind must use their sincere endeavours to make themselves happy through the knowledge of Jesus Christ; or else they may become more miserable by that very means. The business will not do of itself, but we must contribute our pains and labour to bring it about, by a faithful improvement of those means which God affords us of knowledge and of grace.

So the prophet, I showed you, explains his own meaning; and so the sober Jews themselves understand him: particularly Maimonides, who saw very well that if he had said otherwise, he should have been in danger to be confuted by other places of the old Scriptures; where there are the like promises to the Jewish nation, which did not come to pass because of their refractory disposition: and yet the promises were true, because God did what he intended and engaged to effect that blessing for them. Read Jer. xxxii. 37, 39, where he promises to give them *one heart and one way;* and so he did, by disposing things in such a manner at their return from Babylon, as to take away the causes of all their differences. And yet they still continued at odds as much as ever, because they did not receive that heart which he gave them, by disposing themselves to make a good use of his wonderful providence, which ordered all things to concur for the making a blessed accord among them.

Which that it may not prove our own case, let us seriously consider that Christ will not absolutely force his favours upon us; for that is directly contrary both to the gospel and to the law of the Jews also: which suppose that men may refuse what he designs to bestow upon them, nay, puts into their hands. For both of them threaten men severely, if they be so cross as to walk contrary unto him who would do them good: and therefore the issue of this long discourse is, that we must do our part to make ourselves and the world happy.

We must be sensible of the infinite love of God; we must thankfully receive the gospel; we must heartily believe it, and study it, and apply ourselves to observe it; we must regard also the works of Divine providence, which hath a voice, and

speaks loudly, as well as his word; and not expect to be made happy like a company of wild beasts, who are kept by mere violence from destroying others. No, if we will not *show ourselves men*, as this prophet speaks, we shall, after such extraordinary means as God hath used for our amendment, become so much the more brutish, more fierce and violent, like lions and tigers, by being under discipline, but not subdued by it.

For when men *hold the truth of God in unrighteousness*, he delivers them up to a reprobate mind; so that they become not mere beasts, but worse than beasts; for beasts do not act such things as the apostle there says some men committed[1]. Beasts follow the use of nature, and are generally favourable to those of the same kind with themselves: but they who pervert the knowledge of God forsake, in time, the natural use, and, as the proverb is, "One man becomes a wolf to another man;" nay, according to another ancient saying, "They become so many devils one to another," to vex and torment each other without end.

Let this move us therefore to apply our minds to the study of making ourselves and the world happy, by an hearty entertainment of the Christian religion; and then it is heartily entertained, when it makes us love God and one another.

Do your best to bring back those comfortable and truly glorious days when Christians were of one heart and of one soul. Lay aside, or rather, bury all your enmities and hatreds; put away strife and contention; cease from anger, and let go wrath; let no clamour, no evil speaking be heard among you: much less such evil speaking as St. Jude charges upon some ungodly men, who *spake evil of dignities*, ver. 8, and spake evil of those things which *they knew not*, ver. 10.

Wrest this prophecy out of the hands of the Jews, who will not believe what is written in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the unity of Christ's disciples. Therefore let them now see such unity among us, by the change of our fierce and violent natures into a lamb-like disposition. Confute all their objections, and leave them not the shadow of an argument against our religion. Convince them that Jesus is the Christ, by the innocence and unblamableness of your lives; by your love and charity, by subduing all your unruly appetites and

[1] Rom. i. 18, 26, 27, &c.

desires, by taming your furious and outrageous passions, by purging out your choler and gall, all anger, malice, and desire of revenge; by becoming like the sucking child, of which Isaiah here speaks; who is without guile, without ambition, covetousness, pride, hatred, or any other quality whereby the world is now miserably divided and disturbed.

In short, you must be like little children in all things but only *in understanding;* for therein you must *be men*, as the apostle instructs you. *Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men* [m]. And truly, that is the way to be like children *in malice*, (that is, to have none at all,) *in understanding* to be men. For the more thoroughly we know the will of God in Christ Jesus, the more loving and peaceable, as well as just and pure, we shall be. We shall make it our business to do good to all, but hurt to none; no, not to our enemies, and such as do hurt to us. And therefore fill your minds with a solid knowledge of your duty, and not with notions merely, or airy speculations, which serve only for talk, and perhaps for wranglings and disputes.

There is a knowledge, I must here mind you, which will hinder the fulfilling of this prophecy; for it makes men fall out and quarrel one with another, nay, hate all those who are not of their mind and way. But this is not the *knowledge of the Lord;* which, as it is the *wisdom that is pure*, the *knowledge of the holy*, so it is the *meekness of wisdom*, the *way of peace*. For it is the knowledge of God's great love to us in Christ Jesus; and the knowledge of that love and obedience we owe to him, and of that extraordinary kindness we ought to have one for another.

In this knowledge let us grow and increase daily, and not be like to those of whom St. Paul complains, who *doted about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railing, evil surmisings, &c.* [n] I take it to be very remarkable, that the apostle cautions Timothy five or six times against this wrangling religion, which spent its time in questions, doubts, and arguings about many useless notions, that tended to nothing but to fill men's minds with a false opinion of knowledge, and to embroil the church with disputes that could never

[m] 1 Cor. xiv. 20. [n] 1 Tim. vi. 4.

be determined; or, if they could, it was never the more edified thereby either in faith or piety. He begins with this charge, *not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith*[o]. The critical notion of which words, *fables and genealogies*, is not to be expected in this discourse. It is sufficient to know, that he means by *fables* not only false and doubtful relations, which rely upon no certain tradition, but such as were idle also, if they had been true; because they served for nothing but to fill men's minds with unprofitable thoughts, and to keep out better things. Which was the fault also of that endless pains which the false apostles took to derive their pedigree from the ancient patriarchs, (which perhaps may be meant by genealogies.) For they neither made men a jot wiser nor more holy; neither improved their minds, nor reformed their wills and affections. Which is the great thing that the gospel designs, as he shows in the following words, (where he tells what kind of knowledge we should inquire after,) *The end of the commandment*, i. e. the design of the gospel, *is charity*, the love of God and of our neighbour, which springs *out of a pure heart*, purged from all sensual affections and passions, *and a good conscience*, that aims only at being truly void of offence towards God and man; which arises out of *faith unfeigned*, that is, a sincere belief of the gospel of Christ.

To the same effect he admonishes him again, iv. 7, *Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.* Where it is evident he speaks of such discourses as not only busied men's minds to no purpose, but hindered them from being better employed in serviceable actions of piety, mercy, and other Christian virtues.

And as in these two places he opposes piety to this sort of knowledge, so he doth in a third, which I before named, vi. 3, 4, 5, where he describes those who *doted about questions and strifes of words*, as men that *consented not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus, and to the doctrine which is according unto godliness.*

Which he repeats again when he writes a second time to him in the next Epistle. *Flee youthful lusts; but follow right-*

[o] 1 Tim. i. 4.

eousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, &c. [p]

By which you see that this is a knowledge rather to be rooted out than planted and cherished; though, alas! it hath been so diligently cultivated, that it hath *covered the earth as the waters cover the sea:* which the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ ought to have done. The world hath been filled with questions and controversies, and men have thought themselves wise when they had learnt to argue and wrangle about them. On this they have set their hearts, as if it were all religion, or the most considerable part thereof. "But to what end do we contend," as Erasmus honestly glosses upon the first of these places[q], "whether sin be a privation only, or a spot which sticks to the soul? Let this rather be the work of a divine, to persuade all men to abhor and hate every sin. We dispute whole ages, whether that grace with which God loveth and draweth us be the same with that wherewith we love him again? whether it be something created or increated? Let us make this our business rather, that by pure prayers, by innocence of life, by pious actions, we may obtain the favour of God to bestow his grace upon us. We squabble without end, what it is that distinguishes the Father from the Son, and both of them from the Holy Ghost; whether a thing or a relation; and how they can be three when they are one essence. How much more pertinent would it be, by all means to endeavour that we may piously and holily worship and adore that Trinity whose majesty is inscrutable; and by our concord and agreement express to our power their ineffable concord; that so at length we may be admitted into their blessed fellowship for ever!" &c.

This indeed is a contention most worthy of Christians, to strive who shall have most charity, and be the forwardest to come to an amicable agreement, and make a friendly end of all their differences. In this we are truly *followers* or imitators of God: whose great design of sending his Son with the gospel of his grace to us was to reconcile us unto himself, and one

[p] 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23. [q] 1 Tim. i. 6. [Opp. tom. vi. col. 926.]

unto another. If both be not wrought, neither of them is; nor is it possible for us to see happy days, unless there be an accord among us: in order to which we must, among other things, avoid that contentious and quarrelsome sort of knowledge, by which men lose not only their charity, but too often their faith also, and dispute themselves into irreligion.

Which is so necessary a caution, that the apostle, I observe, mentions it once more in the conclusion of his First Epistle to Timothy: *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust,* (the doctrine according to godliness before mentioned, verse 3,) *avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith*[s]. The way to keep the one is to avoid the other: for by refusing to engage ourselves in *vain babblings* and *oppositions*, in *contradicting* one another, and in *perverse* or preposterous *disputations*, (as the apostle calls them, verse 5,) we shall have the more time to bestow in settling the solid knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of our Christian duty, not only in our minds, but in our hearts. Which will give us such satisfaction, that we shall not be willing to have it disturbed by angry disputes, sharp contentions, and fierce conflicts one with another, but (to speak in the language of my text) we shall be as meek and quiet as lambs, though of never such different opinions; and have nothing at all of the wolf in us, lest if we *bite and devour one another, we be consumed one of another.*

Our present oppositions and contests indeed are of another sort than those in the apostle's times; but they have the same ill effect, to hinder better things, especially that thankfulness we ought to have for God's benefits, and that Christian unity and concord, for which all good men wish, and in their several ways endeavour. Give me leave therefore, with respect to our present circumstances, to suggest a few things, which may help to lead us into the way of peace.

Besides the knowledge of the nature of God, and of his love in Christ Jesus, and of the nature of religion, especially of Christianity, and the principal doctrines of it, particularly those two great commandments, of loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves: it might do us some service, if

[s] 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.

we would labour to know ourselves better, and to understand the nature of things, and reflect frequently upon the knowledge we have of former times. Briefly of these three.

I. First, the knowledge of ourselves would teach us, that men do not differ more in their countenances than they do in the frame of their understandings: and therefore we must not spend our pains in making all men think alike, for it is impossible to be effected. But while we differ in our thoughts, the knowledge of ourselves would soon make us sensible we are not such considerable creatures, that it becomes us to be confident in the opinions wherein we clash one against another. If we be, we should consider, that others may think they have as great reason to be confident in their persuasion as we are in ours; and that they differ no further from us than we do from them; and therefore why should we not bear one with another, which is the way of peace when friends cannot agree? Nay, why should we not entirely love one another, notwithstanding such differences? Since there is no more reason for our hating them than there is for their hating us, the opposition being equal on both sides. For just so much as they are against us, we are against them; and there is no more we have to bear withal in them, than they have to bear withal in us.

II. Secondly, if we understood the nature of things a little better, we should the sooner agree to this. For we should find that some things are of very great difficulty; about which there will be ever such variety of judgment, that it is not becoming any of us to be too confident. All things likewise are not of equal moment, and therefore we ought to make a difference, and not contend for every thing alike. There are things also out of our way, which belong not properly to our cognizance; in which it is a good rule, Every man must be believed in his own art. In matters of law, divines have as much reason to rely upon good lawyers, as lawyers have in matters of religion to rely upon good divines; not with an absolute resignation, but with a modest deference to their judgment in their own faculties. If able men of either faculty be of different judgments, that is a reason to be moderate in our opinions, and in our censures, and in all our behaviour; and not to judge ill, much less speak ill of those that differ from us in things wherein the wisest men are not agreed.

To speak freely, the things that at present distract us are either our concerns as we are Christians, or as we are Englishmen; our ecclesiastical, or our civil differences. Now as to the former, there is such a disposition on one side to yield to the weakness of their brethren, that if they on the other side will be satisfied without breaking the very constitution, I do not see how we can fail to come to an happy agreement. All the difficulty is about the other; of which it is not fit in this place to say more than this: Can we be so sure that things are wrong settled, as we are that Christians, of the same communion especially, ought to be at peace, and live in love, and concur in the strictest union for their common safety and preservation? We need not be told how contrary it is to the Christian law to act otherwise; but as for the laws of the land, it is not so evident that any thing is done contradictory to them; for men of great skill in those laws affirm all things that have been acted are consistent with them. Why then should we be violent in our opinions and assertions about such matters, in which it becomes us to be more modest? Nay, why should we give one another any trouble at all about any thing whatsoever, when our religion and our interest require us to agree?

Alexander Aphrodisæus, as Maimonides[t] hath observed, gives these three reasons why controversies are multiplied, and cannot be determined. First, the subtilty and depth of some things; in which, notwithstanding, everybody will be meddling. Secondly, the weakness of human understanding, of which nobody will be sensible. Thirdly, love of dominion and victory, for which men sometimes contend more than for truth. Their reputation is engaged, and they cannot yield till they come off with credit. To which Maimonides himself adds a fourth; which is custom. We have a great love to that unto which we have been used, and are very loath to leave it. Which appears abundantly from what I have said concerning the state of our religion in its beginning; upon which let us reflect a little: for I will meddle with nothing else in the consideration of the third thing I commended to your study, the knowledge of times past.

III. From whence we may learn, first, that good men's prejudices may be such that they cannot be presently removed

[t] More Nevoch. part. i. c. 31. [p. 39.]

though their scruples be ungrounded. As we see by the examples of the first and best times, when some Christians of the Jewish nation could by no means be satisfied about such things as seem to us so plain, that we cannot but wonder they made a doubt about them. The generality of Christians in the Gentile world easily understood that they had no obligation to be circumcised, nor to abstain from certain meats and drinks, and such like things; and yet *many thousands of the Jews who believed*, as St. James tells St. Paul, (Acts xxi. 20,) were all so *zealous of the law*, that they would not have endured him, if he had not charitably considered their weakness, and prudently sweetened them by a temporary compliance. What wonder then is it to see many dissatisfied, in our present circumstances, about things which give others no kind of scruple? Who ought to have no worse thought of them than this; that they labour under old prejudices, as the Jewish Christians did; which must be worn off by time, but cannot be dispossessed on a sudden.

2. For it is very observable, that most of the differences that troubled the church in the beginning, sprang from those who had been bred up under a quite contrary persuasion to that which was settled by the authority of Christ and his apostles. It was not the Gentiles that quarrelled with the Jews, but the Jews quarrelled with them; because they would not look upon their law, which had stood so many ages, as of eternal obligation. And thus, we should consider, it will always be: strong prepossessions cannot easily be persuaded to yield to the clearest reasons. Men will walk on in the way to which they have been accustomed; and hold fast the notions which have been deeply riveted into their minds. We see the power, or tyranny rather, of custom in the very habits and fashions of several countries: unto which men having been always used, they not only account those of their own country most decent, but are so in love with them, that they look upon all other as rude, nay, as ridiculous. In short, there is no greater enemy to knowledge than this (as Maimonides notes in the place before named); for as all men are pleased with that to which they have been long habituated, so to many it may have become very profitable; and some may be afraid that their authority will fall to the ground, together with that which they have long maintained.

3. But notwithstanding this, we learn from that ancient example we may be at peace, if we do as they did, or as they were taught to do. That is, be not angry one with another; but patiently bear with each other's infirmities; and *be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love*, as if there were no differences at all among us; and forbear rash judging on one side, and contempt on the other: remembering we all serve the same Lord; and that it is neither for his service nor his honour to have his family divided, but agree together in this, to do one another all the good they can, as the best service they can do to him. Let our heats at least be abated, and not grow more violent than they have been formerly; (as they are in danger, I have shown you, to be when we resist the means of being made one;) and then it is to be hoped that we shall all come, in time, as the first Christians did, to be *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.* Which is the last thing I have to observe from what hath been said of the state of things in the beginning.

4. And we shall the sooner come to it, if we will but live in love and peace together, notwithstanding our present differences. For this will make us capable of receiving and giving satisfaction; which will not be admitted from enemies, or strangers, or such as are shy one of another. In order to which, let us forbear, as I said, all censuring one of another; especially all evil speaking: let us suppress anger, and resolve not to fall out, but to converse one with another as friends; and remember that the way to agreement of all parties, is not to bring men to be of one opinion, but to be of one mind; which we may be, though of different opinions; not by thinking the same things, but by thinking well one of another; endeavouring to preserve charity as carefully as to preserve truth. For though truth be great, yet charity is greater: which made a man of no small learning and piety say, (and, I think, not amiss,) "Discord is so odious to me, that even truth itself displeases me, if it be seditious[u]."

I intended to have pressed one thing more upon you; which is, that you would not fail to study the providence of God in the late great and wonderful revolution; whereby he seems to

[u] ["Mihi adeo est invisa discordia, ut veritas etiam displiceat seditiosa."] Eras. Epist. ad P. Barbirium. [Epist. dlxxxvii. tom. iii. col. 656 D.]

me to have designed the same that he did to Israel when they came out of Babylon; to *give us all one heart, and one way, that we might fear him for ever, for the good of us, and of our children after us,* as I observed before out of Jer. xxxii. 39. What a pity is it that we should lose such a blessed opportunity of healing all our breaches, and closing all together with strong affection in one firm body for our mutual preservation and happiness!

But perhaps we may not agree in the meaning of this providence, and therefore I shall conclude with the prayer of the apostle, Heb. xiii. 20:

Now the God of peace, which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED

AT ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

ON THE DAY OF THANKSGIVING,

JANUARY 31, 1689,

FOR THE GREAT DELIVERANCE OF THIS KINGDOM BY MEANS OF HIS HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF ORANGE FROM POPERY AND ARBITRARY POWER.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM

EARL OF BEDFORD,

KNIGHT OF THE NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER,

MY MOST HONOURED LORD AND PATRON.

My Lord,

I HAD not the least thought, either when I penned or preached this sermon, to publish it to the world; but have been overcome to yield to it, after a long resistance, (which is the reason it comes forth so late, by the importunity of a great number of my parishioners; who persuade me they shall reap some profit by the reading, as they tell me they did by the hearing of it.

If they so do, they are bound very much to your lordship for it, by whose favour I was promoted to this place: where your kindness hath not grown less to me, but so much increased, that I cannot but take this opportunity to assure your lordship it shall never be forgotten by,

My Lord,

Your most humble and affectionate servant,

SYMON PATRICK.

Feb. 7, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

[a] ["Jan. 22. This day the lords spiritual and temporal and commons assembled at Westminster. The lord marquis of Halifax executed the place of speaker in the house of lords; and the commons chose Henry Powle, esq. to be their speaker. After which a letter from his highness the prince of Orange was read in both houses on the occasion of their meeting; and the lords and commons unanimously resolved upon an address to be presented to his highness of thanks for what he had done, and humbly to desire him to continue the administration of public affairs till further application be made by them to his highness. It was likewise ordered by the lords and commons, that Thursday the 31st of January instant be appointed for a day of public thanksgiving to Almighty God in the cities of London and Westminster, and ten miles distance, for having made his highness the prince of Orange the glorious instrument of the great deliverance of this kingdom from popery and arbitrary power: and that Thursday, the 14th of February next, be appointed for a public thanksgiving throughout the whole kingdom for the same; and then the lords and commons went in a body to St. James's, to present the forementioned address to his highness."—London Gazette, Jan. 22, $168\frac{8}{9}$.]

A THANKSGIVING SERMON

FOR

THE DELIVERANCE OF THIS KINGDOM, &c.

PSALM LXXV. 1.

Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.

AS it is impossible to look upon the curious frame of the world, and consider the admirable contrivance and harmony in every part, but we shall be inclined to reflect upon a supreme and almighty Wisdom, which was the Author of it, so we cannot take notice of the several wonderful events that fall out in the world, beyond all human expectation; the strange changes (for instance) and unlooked-for revolutions that there are in our own affairs, but it will dispose us to confess the Providence of God, who with a careful eye doth superintend and see to the government of every thing that he hath made.

The first of these is the foundation of that admiration, reverence, and awful regard which we pay to the Divine Majesty; as the latter is of that devotion of mind which we express in humble and hearty prayers and thanksgivings to him. For were we never so sure that there is a God who created all things by his power, yet we should not think of addressing our supplications to him, and offering him our thankful acknowledgments, did we not also believe that his care extends itself even as far as this earth, and reaches unto us the children of men.

That is the ground of this hymn, which the divine writer composed in consideration of some remarkable passage of that Providence.

And that is the occasion which hath brought us now together; to acknowledge with thankful praises as wonderful (I am sure as unexpected) a turn in the affairs of this corner of the world as ever was. In which if we do not see a finger of God, it is because we are blind, or, which is worse, shut our eyes against the most evident tokens of a divine hand. Which hath given us reason to express our joyful resentments in such words as these: *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.*

What the occasion of this hymn was, will be seen in the progress of my discourse. In the entrance of which I cannot but take notice, that the Psalmist was so full of admiration, love and joy, when he considered what God had done for them, that he was transported thereby out of the method of common writers: who are wont to proceed from the relation of matters of fact to set down the consequences of them, and the passions which they are apt to produce. But here his heart was pressed with such a mighty sense of God's goodness, that he bursts out at the very first word into as pathetic a strain of thanksgiving to him as can be conceived, before he relates what he thanks him for. His affection was suitable to the benefits they had received: both were extraordinary, which transported him to the greatest height of devotion. And that doth not so much follow art as nature; which can attend to nothing else, when it is possessed with delightful passions.

According to which method of the Psalmist, I shall in the first place treat a while of the duty of thanksgiving. And then,

Secondly, proceed to show that the works of God's providence in the world ought to excite us thereunto.

And thirdly, that the more wonderful those works are, the greater, in all reason, ought our thankfulness for them to be.

And lastly, (if I have time for it,) that we have this reason for it among others; that when God doth any *wondrous works*, they are an earnest of some greater blessings he further intends to bestow, if we do not unthankfully deprive ourselves of them; for his *wondrous works declare that his name is near*.

I.

I begin with the duty of thanksgiving. About which you must not expect an exact discourse, because it is not here to be considered in itself so much as in order to something else. It will be sufficient to gather together such passages in this book of Psalms as will, in a plain and familiar manner, express the temper of a thankful mind; and show withal from whence it arises.

I. And it begins in a diligent observation of the benefits which are done unto us: of which if we take not special notice, they will be like the things that pass by a blind man's eyes; of which he never speaks, and with which he is not at all affected.

Therefore after the Psalmist had so often repeated this as the burden of his song, *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men*[a], he concludes all with these remarkable words, which show us the fountain from whence these devout acknowledgments spring, *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* None but wise observers can have any sense of God's goodness, in the greatest benefits which he bestows upon them, especially in such providences as were brought about by a long chain of events; one of which drew on another in a silent manner.

If a man's eyes be closed, or if they roll about in unsteady and giddy motions, he cannot take notice of such objects as present themselves unto him, nor receive their salutations with any sense or acknowledgment. And it is the same case, if a man be lulled asleep in the lap of sensual pleasure, or be grubbing like a mole in the earth: if he attend, I mean, only to his own private gain and advantage; if he hath a thousand projects in his head for himself, which busy all his thoughts, or be of a murmuring discontented humour at every little cross occurrence; this alone will turn his thoughts from the infinite goodness of God, in the most signal blessings which he bestows upon the nation wherein he lives. By which means God will lose all the praise of his mercies, because they will not be at all observed or regarded by such ungrateful souls: who must

[a] Psalm cvii. 8, 15, 21, 31.

first be disposed to be serious, sober-minded, and attentive to what is done in the world, and is of universal concernment to it, before they can be made sensible of *the loving-kindness of the Lord.*

II. Which when we observe, we must carefully remember and lay up in our minds; or else these two mischiefs will ensue. First, that we shall have only a flash of devotion kindled in us for a few moments. And secondly, we shall thank the Divine goodness only for present mercies, but not for those that are past.

We must imitate the Psalmist therefore in that admirable hymn, saying, *Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*[b]. Of which there is no more remembrance in some men's minds, than there are footsteps of a bird newly flown by left in the air. One may as well go to search out the path of a fish in the water, as ask them which way God hath gone to do them good. So thin, so fluid and inconsistent are their minds, that they retain no impressions that are made upon them. A most fearful example of which we have in the Israelites, who too *soon forgat the works of God, and remembered not the multitude of his mercies; that they provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea:* at that very place where they had been newly saved by a most miraculous providence[c].

I beseech God we may never be guilty of the like horrid ingratitude; unto which there seems to be too great an inclination in some among us, who a few weeks ago longed and sighed for deliverance from those dangers which were ready to swallow us up; and were no sooner delivered, but, as if nothing had been done for them, they fell a murmuring against their Deliverer, the great instrument, I mean, of their preservation; because every thing was not managed according to the model of their desires.

This is an humour we must endeavour to cure, if any of us have been infected with it; because it makes us soon forget the works of God, and that will make us unthankful. For a thankful temper of spirit must be made and maintained by considering and often revolving those observations of the Divine

[b] Psalm ciii. 1, 2. [c] Psalm cvi. 7, 13.

providence which we have reposited in our mind. We must frequently turn over, as I may say, the leaves of the book of remembrance, which we have written in our hearts, of the several notes we have taken of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

Which is so much of the essence of thankfulness, that when we would express the contrary, ingratitude, we say men are unmindful of their obligations.

Now that which will most impress the benefit we have received upon our minds is the observation of those circumstances wherewith they were clothed, and came attended to us. As the manner how they were conveyed, and that they were unlikely to be effected by much means; that a deliverance was unexpected and unlooked for, and yet the arrival of it most seasonable to save us from ruin; and that there was nothing in us to invite it, but we rather deserved to be made more miserable; and yet God took compassion upon us, and made those very things contribute to our salvation which were designed for our ruin.

These and such like other circumstances (which are very applicable to our present case) will make God's goodness admirable in our eyes; and that which strikes us with admiration will be longest remembered.

III. When we would give solemn thanks to God for his mercies, we must set ourselves to consider and ponder the worth and value as well as count the multitude of them. We must weigh as well as number them.

So the Psalmist teaches us, if we compare Psalm lvii. 7, with cxxxix. 17. In the former he tells us, *his heart was fixed, his heart was fixed*, (so steadfastly settled, that is, that he would not let it stir from his work,) and then *he sang and gave praise*. And in the latter he admires God's mercies, first, as they are invaluable, *O how precious are thy thoughts towards me, O God!* and then as they are innumerable, *how great is the sum of them*.

Thus if we apply our thoughts to the present deliverance which God hath wrought for us, we shall find the miseries from which we are preserved so innumerable, and consequently such a multitude of mercies for which we are indebted; and those so dear, so precious, all that we are worth, either as men or as

Christians, our civil rights and liberties, but especially our holy religion secured to us; that it is impossible not to have our hearts affected with God's goodness at present, and if we keep those things in mind, not to *give thanks unto him as long as we live, and praise him while we have any being.* That is the next.

IV. We must by these considerations affect our hearts with God's innumerable and inestimable mercies vouchsafed to us, and make them sensible of the obligation which they lay upon us. So that we may say with David, *Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips*[d]. He speaks, you see, of God's benefits with such a sensible relish, as demonstrated he more than tasted the sweetness of his loving-kindness, and valued the love that gave them more than the best and most excellent of them.

We had need practise the foregoing duties well, of serious fixing our heart, and setting a just value and due price upon God's blessings; for otherwise we shall not be so affected towards him as we ought, nor make him those returns of gratitude which he expects. For such is the imperfection of our nature, we are least apt to mind and observe those things which are nearest to us, and in our quiet possession: our souls being herein like to our eye, which sees nothing that lies upon it and touches it; but discerns it clearly when the object is removed to some distance from it.

We mind not those blessings while we enjoy them, and have them in our hands; which we hold to be very precious when they are taken away and carried from our embraces.

Without serious consideration and frequent reflections, the more we have of the best things, the less we shall be affected with them. The plentifulness of the choicest fare in the world makes it no dainties with us, but breeds in us such a fulness and satiety as makes it less esteemed. And so it is with all the rest of God's blessings. Those which we commonly and constantly enjoy, though of never such value, move us little; unless we duly poise them in the scales of serious consideration. Witness that great blessing of health, of which it is pity we

[d] Psalm lxiii. 3, &c.

should not know the worth without being sick; and the blessing of liberty, which, I beseech you, let us learn to prize without being made slaves.

V. When our hearts are thus affected with God's mercies, and the love from whence they flow, there naturally arises in us an holy joy in God, which is the most agreeable passion of all other, and disposes us to say, *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.* For this joy is apt to burst out into songs of praise, and indited all the thankful hymns we read in the book of God.

Such as that of the children of Israel when the Lord turned their captivity by an amazing deliverance out of Babylon: *Then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad*[e]. It is not easy to enumerate all the like instances of joy and gladness for private as well as public blessings, which produced songs of praise, as a part of their thanksgivings; according to that of the psalmist, *I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving*[f].

VI. But thankfulness doth not consist merely in these devout and joyful songs, but in paying our vows we made to God, either in the time of our affliction and trouble, or upon the first approaches of a merciful deliverance. For these are two seasons which commonly engage men in pious vows to God; when they are oppressed with grief and sorrow, or when they are suddenly eased, and overflowed with joy. And the discharge of these vows God himself requires as a proof of our sincere thankfulness to him for his benefits: *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High*[g]. Which the psalmist promises in Psalm cxvi. 17, 18, *I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people.* And makes the whole world speak the same language in Psalm lxv. 1, 2, *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion, and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou*

[e] Psalm cxxvi. 2, 3. [f] Psalm lxix. 30. [g] Psalm l. 14.

that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Not merely with prayers, but with dutiful performance of their vows.

VII. And good men thought themselves bound upon such occasions to renew their pious resolutions, and tie themselves faster to God in holy purposes, to please him in all things; who was so gracious to them in such singular benefits as challenged their highest praises. Thus you find David resolving never to forget to thank God for his mercies to him: *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever*[h]. And in Psalm lxxi. 15, 16, he says, *My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* Which is a resolution to trust in God for ever, of whose goodness he had had such large experience: and never to depend upon any thing, but only his power, holiness, and faithfulness, in performing all his promises. Which engaged him in a further resolution, to do the will of God in all things, and live suitable to his obligations: *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*[i].

These are three proper resolutions to be made when our hearts are dilated with joy in God for the benefits he hath bestowed upon us: and we should endeavour to seal such resolutions upon our hearts, in those solemn words of the psalmist, (which follow that affectionate exclamation, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* ver. 12, and his resolution *to pay his vows in the presence of all God's people,* ver. 14,) *O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds*[k]. Where he not only solemnly devotes himself to God's service, but binds himself to be entirely his, as much as a servant was his master's when he was born in his house of the body of his slave; or as a poor captive was wholly his who had

[h] Psalm xxx. 11, 12. [i] cxvi. 7, 8, 9. [k] cxvi. 16.

redeemed him from thraldom, or rescued him out of the hand of an enemy in which he was like to perish. For that is the proper notion of the word *servus*, 'a servant,' one that is saved and not slain, when it was in the power of a conqueror to take away his life. Such a one, owing his very being in this world to him that saved him from destruction, stands bound in all the duty and service that it is possible to be performed by him as long as he hath a day to live.

VIII. But our thankfulness is not completed till we arrive by these means at such an habitual sense of God's goodness as powerfully inclines us frequently to reflect upon it, and always to be making good our promises and resolutions of obedience.

Our first thanksgivings are to conclude in a thankful disposition, which is the best security for future performance.

Constant thanks will flow from those who are of a thankful nature. Which will incline us to a comportment agreeable to the liking of those who have obliged us; that by a constant study to do what is pleasing to them, we may become more acceptable in their eyes, and invite their further favour. According to which God himself declares he expects our thankfulness should end in this, if we expect his endless love. *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God*[l].

Whatsoever falls short of obedience is either but a compliment, or no more than a good-natured fit.

And as for compliments, the more finely they are adorned, and trimmed up with songs of praise, with vows and protestations, the more nauseous and fulsome they are; because a studied piece of flattery which the Divine Majesty abhors.

And as God himself calls this flattery of him; *They flattered him with their mouths*[m], &c.; so fits of good nature, the more passionate they are, the more they are apt to flatter and abuse ourselves; by persuading us we have discharged the duty of gratitude unto God, when we have only eased ourselves of a burden which at that present lay upon us.

And indeed all passions that come by fits are apt to do us hurt, especially if they be very violent. It is a constant motion which is most profitable to us. Thus physicians ob-

[l] Psalm l. 23. [m] lxxviii. 36.

serve, that the perspiration which is made by a violent merely of the body or mind is wont to weaken us; when that which is made equally all the day and night long gives us strength and vigour. So it is in the exercises of devotion: the vehement expressions men make of their love and gratitude in their prayers and praises only, the heat they put themselves into, and the labour they take to raise up a passion, is nothing so beneficial as a constant quiet sense of God's love warming the heart, and insensibly breathing forth itself in the whole tenour of a man's actions in a regular life.

The former, if he take not care, may prove hurtful; for by spending himself too much in one thing, he is the less able to perform his duty in other matters. His affections being all evaporated in that great commotion, he afterwards grows so cold and feeble, that he can do nothing but sigh and groan that he is no better.

But it is time to finish this part of my discourse, which may be briefly reduced to these four heads.

To the performance of this duty of thankfulness there is required,

1. First, an act of the mind, to observe and take a true survey of all the blessings which the Divine goodness doth at any time confer upon us.

2. Secondly, an act of the memory, to represent them again as occasion serves, and set them before the eyes of our mind. For that is the treasury of those observations which we make, the storehouse in which we lay up the notes of God's mercies.

3. Thirdly, an act of reason and consideration, who it is that gives us all these good things; for what an end, by what means, and in what measure, both as to their value and their number. Which when we have well performed, we shall be prepared for the fourth and last, which is,

4. An act of the will, that must frame an affectionate acknowledgment of God and of his great goodness; binding us fast to him by acts of love and joyful devotion, by serious performance of our vows, and hearty resolutions perpetually to obey him.

I will not stay to tell you what title God hath to such thanksgivings; but immediately pass to the second general thing I propounded.

redeem[illegible]

II.

That the wonderful works of God in the world justly challenge from us our most grateful acknowledgments. They ought, that is, to be so diligently observed, so faithfully remembered, so carefully laid to heart, and often revolved, that we may be so affected with them as to give continual praise to God for them; with such joy and gladness, and such a sincere performance of our vows, as may testify the lively and lasting sense we have of his love, and engage us in his service for ever.

I will content myself at this time with that instance of God's providence unto which this Psalm itself directs our thoughts; in those discriminating acts of God's justice, whereby he makes a remarkable difference between one sort of men and another, and renders unto them severally according to their works.

And those acts of God's discriminating justice were twofold; having respect both to the punishment of the wicked, and the salvation of the good. *God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them*[n]. The words, I think, refer to the insolent and haughty behaviour of Sennacherib and his captains, who, having got all the fortresses of the kingdom into their hands except Jerusalem, and reduced that also into great straits, insulted over Hezekiah and his people in a most imperious manner; till God the righteous Judge took the matter into his hand, and decided the quarrel by a most remarkable vengeance, which humbled the one, and exalted the other more than ever. For though God's own people had for a time tasted of the cup of astonishment, and felt the smart of sharp afflictions, (which is the meaning of those words, *he poureth out of the same*, upon them as well as others,) yet the dregs of this cup, the stupifying and intoxicating ingredients, were reserved for their enemies; who were made to drink them up to the very bottom, until they reeled, and staggered, and fell, and never rose up any more. Which is expressed again in plainer words: *All the horns*, that is, the power, *of the wicked will I cut off; and the horns of the righteous shall be exalted*[o]. In such acts of these God ought

[n] Psalm lxxv. 7, 8. [o] Ver. 10.

to be admired and acknowledged, in his punishing the good sometime to make them better, and in destroying the bad who can by no means be persuaded to become good.

We of this nation particularly have great reason to observe these things at this time. For, after a long invasion of all our just rights and liberties, the popish party had intruded themselves so successfully into all places of trust and authority everywhere, that they wanted but a little of making themselves masters of these three kingdoms; and were just upon the point of confirming all their usurpations by the formalities of a legal establishment, in such a parliament as they were about, by all manner of indirect means, to pack together. When, behold! the outstretched hand of Heaven appeared against them, to confound the Babel which they had been so many years a building. On a sudden their long studied designs were dashed in pieces, like mere bubbles, and that in a moment.

By which defeat the great Judge of the world hath made a notorious distinction between those who stood firm to their religion and liberties, and those that were about to betray them; and hath demonstrated to us all, that nothing is safe but what is just; that they are no better than fools, who go about to separate interest from honesty; and that there is no such way to thrive as to keep in his ways, though they expose us to seeming disadvantages. For he hath taken the subtle in their own craftiness, and ensnared them in the work of their own hands: whereby he hath rescued us from becoming a prey to the teeth of those ambitious and ravenous spirits who thought to devour us.

And therefore we ought to bless and praise him, above all other people, in these acts of his providence and just government of the world; which can never be enough admired. For when God doth such things, he keeps, as I may call it, a little day of judgment: the great day of all, which we expect at the end of the world, being a day of general separation and distinction of the bad from the good; for which he prepares us beforehand, and warns us to it, by the petty sessions (as they may be called) which he holds in all ages. Wherein he ascends his tribunal, and *sits in the throne* (as the psalmist speaks) *judging right:* beginning that dreadful day by remarkable punishments upon notorious and numerous offenders, and as

remarkable preservations of those who, being oppressed by them, were in danger to suffer an utter ruin from their violence.

By this he shows to all men that he will be partaker with none in their wickedness: but be they never so great, they shall be all confounded and perish who do unjustly, though for a time they may prosper and flourish in the world.

Thus we have not only heard with our ears, but our eyes have seen it: and this very day bids us mark and observe, how gloriously God's providence hath triumphed over the bold injustice and daring usurpations and impieties of insolent men.

And it is a thing to be carefully noted by us, for this reason among other, that it may be a caution to us never to take any unlawful courses, but to make as exact a difference between good and evil in our practice as God hath made in his providence.

We ought, in prudence as well as conscience, to take warning by other men's miscarriages; and not be bold to encourage ourselves in an evil matter, because it is not presently punished.

Optimum est aliena insania frui, as Pliny speaks: 'it is a singular happiness to reap the benefit of other men's madness and wild extravagancies.'

It is much better to be taught by other men's mishaps than by our own.

Wise men learn to beware by the disgrace and shame which they see others suffer.

As wholesome remedies are drawn from poison, so from the ruin of men of evil principles honest persons may derive precepts for their direction.

And the greater and the more powerful they are who fall, and the stronger they seemed to stand by evil practices, the more wonderful is the hand of God, and the more instructive when he throws them down.

What is more amazing (says an eminent historian) than to see a lofty mountain, commanding over a goodly plain, sink and swallowed up in a moment? And yet it is not less strange to behold a man of mighty power, a great *colossus*, surrounded with numerous supporters, overthrown in an instant. This cannot but breed some astonishment for the present; though

the example, alas! be very much neglected: posterity still trusting to their own judgment, and adventuring to walk the very same way; but with another pace, and more cautiously, they fancy, than those that went before them.

One ship alone, which happily returns from a long and dangerous navigation, hath more power to encourage bold undertakers to attempt the like voyage, than the shipwreck of a hundred vessels hath to divert them from it.

For such is the vain conceit we have of ourselves; so apt we are to be flattered with our own imaginations, that no man believes ill success is ordained for him, especially if he prosper in his evil way at the first attempt.

But this their way is their folly: and whoso is wise, and hath the fear of God before his eyes, will believe that no artifice, no power can secure him who hath God for his enemy; as they all have who are ungodly.

Remember the counsel of the psalmist: *Trust not in oppression, become not vain in robbery. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard the same; that power belongeth unto God. Also unto thee, O God, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work*[o]. That is, let no man oppress others, let no man cozen and cheat, lie and dissemble, nor promote his end by any violence: for many a time hath God declared that he is the governor of the world, who will see right maintained. His works have spoken more than once, that power, dominion and strength belongs to him; and that no evildoer is great enough to defend himself against him: unto whom also belongs mercy, which he will show to all good men; for whom he hath the greatest kindness, and therefore will bless them and do them good; because he *renders to every one according to his work.*

And so I proceed to the third general observation.

III.

That the more wonderful the works of God are, the greater in all reason ought our thankfulness to be. Which the psalmist denotes by the repetition of his gratitude, and doubling his words. *Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks: unto thee do we give thanks:* because his power was so stupendously great, in

[o] Psalm lxii. 10, 11, 12.

defeating of Sennacherib and all his forces. The like you may read in Psalm ix. 1, 2, where there are four several declarations of his resolutions to be thankful to God for that marvellous act of his providence in the overthrow of Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, who boldly defied Israel. *I will praise thee, O God, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.* In many other places you may meet such repeated acknowledgments, particularly in Psalm lxxii. 18, 19, where he not only himself blesses the Lord, but wishes his name may be blessed for ever; and that by all mankind: which hearty desire he confirms with a double Amen, *Amen and Amen.*

Now in this very Psalm there are two remarkable passages, which serve to illustrate the wonderfulness of those works mentioned in my text; and may be applied to that wondrous work for which we give our thanks to God this day.

First, in preserving and raising up good men, when they were in their lowest depression.

Verse 3, below my text, *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.* The whole country, that is, was in a flame, and such a terrible combustion made, that it melted away, and one part of it was separated from the other. All the soldering whereby they were united together was dissolved; so that the whole frame of the government was in a manner broken, and likely to come to utter ruin. But now the *pillars of the earth* (that is, men of excellent virtue and of authority, who are the props of their church and country) were *borne up* by a Divine hand, which kept them from falling. So the Jews call their wise men *the pillars of the world;* and by the same name St. Paul calls the chiefest of the apostles, Gal. ii. 9. Such eminent persons were supported in their constancy when they were assaulted by the hand of violence, and in danger to be shaken, nay, subverted: and they by their prudent advice and pious endeavours, by their prayers and by their tears, quenched those flames, and prevailed for a happy settlement again.

Secondly, the providence of God was as marvellous on the other side, in pulling down the wicked when they were at their greatest height and exaltation. *I said unto the fools, Deal*

not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn. Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck [p]. These words show that the folly of wicked men made them prodigiously insolent, and so vain as to imagine it was impossible that they should meet with a check, much less see their power broken. But in the midst of these vaunts, they not only received a sudden rebuke, but had their *horn* (that is their power) *cut off*, and utterly disabled from doing any further mischief. Whereby the Almighty showed them their senseless confidence, and taught them (if they could learn) to be no more so bold and arrogant.

The very same remark the psalmist makes in another place upon one of these insolent, haughty boasters, viz. Cush the Benjamite. *His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate. I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness: and will sing praise unto the name of the Lord most high* [q].

You see the use which David's pious heart made of such wonderful deliverances. Which ought to be the more regarded, because the Divine wisdom, on purpose, suffers things to come to such an extremity (the wicked to be lifted up so high, and the good laid so low) to make us sensible that it is a Divine hand whereby we are delivered; and that he may get himself a greater name in the world, and excite all our hearts to the higher gratitude.

And if these things may be applied at this day to any nation in the world, I think they may safely, and in the very first place, be applied unto us. For *our earth and the inhabitants thereof have been*, in a manner, *dissolved*. The very foundations of our government were about to be razed. The whole fabric did not only shake and totter, but was upon the point of being buried in its rubbish. When, behold, the hand of God supported it, (by supporting the spirits and assisting the endeavours of many good and great men, who laboured to preserve it,) and on a sudden hath broken in pieces the power that pushed at it to overthrow it, and given us hope to see it shine in its ancient splendour and glory. For the cloud that covered us, and filled us with melancholy apprehensions, is not only scattered, but dispersed without a stormy wind and tem-

[p] Psalm lxxv. 4, 5. [q] Psalm vii. 16, 17.

pest. Salvation is come to us, by the help of that illustrious prince, whom God hath made the great instrument of our deliverance, in a perfect calm, without any considerable disturbance.

We may take up the words of the psalmist, *Thou hast proved us, O God; thou hast tried us as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, &c., but hast brought us forth into a wealthy place*[r], a state, that is, of liberty, prosperity, and ease. And therefore every one of us should resolve, as it therefore follows, *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings, I will pay thee my vows: which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble. Come, and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*

And truly it is but just, that upon such a day as this we should recount the wonders of God's providence; for which we ought to give him our highest thanks.

Come therefore, and hearken, while I declare what the Lord hath done for us in this church and kingdom.

First, he hath in a signal manner vindicated himself from the aspersion of favouring unjust and irregular courses. In which men prospered so long, that they looked upon it as an encouragement to proceed: and presumed God was on their side, whom they entitled to every ill-favoured design and practice of their own.

Which now he hath so notoriously discountenanced, that all the world may see *he is not the Author of confusion, but of peace:* and every one of us may learn to avoid that which is evil, though we should be invited by never such fair opportunities to greaten ourselves, and to advance, as we may fancy, his glory and the interest of religion by unlawful means.

Secondly, God hath also marvellously justified the truth of his holy gospel here professed, and confounded the vain traditions of men, which arrogantly coping with it, and being made equal to it, were in danger to subvert it.

We may truly say the Bible triumphs in this deliverance, and hath gotten a glorious victory over human inventions: which are no less confuted by this Divine providence, than

[r] Psalm lxvi. 10, &c.

they have been by dint of argument. For the bold assertors of them were no less confident of their prevalency than of their truth. Both were presumed with equal assurance, which may induce us to hope there is no better foundation for the one than we are sure there is for the other; but that they both (their principles, I mean, and their prevailing here) stand upon the like tottering terms.

Thirdly, God hath vindicated likewise our religion from that contempt and scorn which they cast upon it. The northern heresy, as they reproachfully called it, hath got the better of their catholic religion. The supporters of which lately lifted up their horn so high, and pushed at our church so furiously, as if they not only intended, but were assured it should not stand much longer. But the righteous Lord hath made them fall by their own violence, and hath put this new song into our mouths, (which is as proper now as in the days of old:) *They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright*[s].

Fourthly, whereby God gives us the fairest opportunity that ever was put into our hands, of healing all the divisions and breaches that are among good men: if they have any heart to make use thereof. And we ought to rejoice and give thanks, if it be but for the hope that we may become one: and no longer look upon each other as enemies, but as friends and brethren, who ought to come to terms of agreement.

Fifthly, he hath hereby also preserved the best laws in the world, which contain the wisdom of many generations.

Sixthly, and consequently hath put us into a way of settling the English liberties, which were sealed by the blood of many of our famous ancestors, but in eminent danger by one bold stroke to be ravished from us.

Seventhly, he hath revived likewise, by this means, the hope of all protestants in the world, whose eyes are upon us as the most potent people of that religion, in whose prosperity they rejoice as in their own.

Eighthly, and why may I not add, that this providence gives us hope to see some deeds of darkness brought to light, whereby the innocence of such worthies will be vindicated as have been unjustly defamed?

[s] Psalm xx. 8.

Ninthly, all which God hath done for us on such a sudden, that he would have been counted a fool who should have spoken of such a revolution a quarter of a year ago.

Tenthly, and it is brought to pass with the loss of very little blood; which I hope will not make this deliverance less, but more valuable, because we come by it so easily.

Eleventhly, nay, more than this, God hath made our enemies themselves the first, and not the meanest instruments of their own destruction. All that they contrived against us turned most manifestly upon their own heads. Every step they took carried them backward, and set them further off from the end at which they aimed.

Twelfthly, and lastly, we may hope that God hath vouchsafed these blessings to us as a return of many earnest prayers which have been made by good people among us.

And therefore in all these regards we ought to make the greater returns of praise and thankful obedience unto God. Who, if we prove ungrateful to him, can turn all our joy into sudden mourning, our singing into sighing; and instead of the garments of joy and gladness, clothe us with sackcloth and ashes; because of our unworthy behaviour towards so gracious and great a Benefactor.

Let our thankfulness therefore be great, in some proportion to his wondrous works.

1. First, in the intenseness, as I may call it, and earnestness of our minds, to praise him with our *whole heart*, (as the psalmist speaks, Psalm cxi. 1, 2,) and to call up *all that is within us to bless his holy name*[t]: where the reason he gives for it (ver. 6) is very pertinent to our purpose; *the Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

2. And secondly, in the extension of it, the greater our deliverance is, the more the hand of God hath appeared therein, so much the more time should we spend in thinking of it, and labouring to affect our hearts with it: that so we may praise his name for ever, saying with the psalmist. *I will extol thee, my God, O king; I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever*[u].

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, especially

[t] Psalm ciii. 1. [u] cxlv. 1, 2.

in such works as these, which we cannot sufficiently praise; and therefore should desire and endeavour that posterity may praise him for them, as it there follows, ver. 4: *One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts,* &c.

But we are most of all concerned to express our unfeigned thankfulness by a more solicitous care to please God in an exact obedience. Without which our religious services are but hypocrisy; and may prove a dangerous deceit, making us cry *Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* For *there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

Especially if we should continue to do wickedly after such obligations to reform, which will highly increase our guilt. According to that of Ezra when the people were joining themselves with the heathen, after their deliverance from Babylon [x]: *Seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved, and hast given us such a deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments? wouldest thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*

We have the greatest reason in the world to dread this; and therefore let us *fear the Lord and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord; and then shall we continue to follow the Lord* [y], that is, to be a happy kingdom; settled in the secured possession of our religion, laws, and liberties; and not fear what man can do unto us.

For God shows by what he hath done already that he hath a mind to do more. He will not leave his own work imperfect, but finish it in the firm establishment of what we enjoy; and in the addition of other blessings which may make these churches and kingdoms a praise in the earth. For that *his name is near, his wondrous works declare.*

IV.

This is a point I would gladly have pursued if there had been room for it; but the time will not suffer me to do much more than explain this phrase, *Thy name is near.*

The *name of God* is in holy language God himself; who is

[x] Ezra ix. 14, 15. [y] 1 Sam. xii. 14.

therefore said to be *near* when any wondrous work is done, because it could not have been done without him.

1. That is certainly imported in this form of speech, *Thy name is near*, &c. The works are so strange that they plainly speak thou hadst a hand in them, else they could not have been wrought. The disappointment of the crafty speaks God's wisdom; the throwing down the mighty from their seats declares his power; the great benefits he bestows on his people show his goodness; his punishments on the wicked proclaim his justice; the unexpected evidence of all these manifests his sovereign and uncontrollable dominion: the blowing away all the contrivances of many years in a moment, tells us there is a vigilant Providence which sends deliverance in the opportunest seasons; the very changes and mutations that are made in the world are an argument of his immutable and unchangeable nature, which carries on one constant design of correcting vice and encouraging virtue. For he makes no changes merely for the love of particular men, but for the love of religion and piety; which he resolves to promote by other hands, when it is neglected by those who have power to do it.

2. But this may also be further suggested by this form of speech, that we ought to look upon every wonderful work of God as a token of some other blessing he intends us, besides the present he bestows upon us. It is apparent he approaches, and is desirous to join himself unto us, and (as the Scripture speaks) to be our God, else he would not have done such strange things for us. This was the way in which Manoah's wife reasoned: *If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received an offering at our hands; neither would he have showed us all these things; nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these*[z].

And may we venture to argue with ourselves after the same manner, when he doth any thing extraordinary for us; If he had a mind to destroy us, nay, did he not bear a favour to us, he would not have taken such a seasonable care of us; and wrought such an unexpected deliverance as this for us.

Which is a meditation that renders the goodness of God most admirable in our eyes, when we consider he is not content to bestow a single benefit upon us. There are none of his

[z] [Judges xiii. 23.]

blessings that come alone, but are accompanied with a numerous train of good things, which follow and attend every one of them, if we will heartily receive the present favour that he doth us. We find this true in his spiritual blessings. He not only prevents us with the blessings of his goodness, and is found of them that seek him not; but when we do set ourselves seriously and diligently to seek after him, he not only graciously meets us, (as the father is said to do to the prodigal son,) but is desirous to dwell with us, and to take up his abode in us. He would not give so little as a pardon to a returning sinner, but his holy Spirit; the joys and comforts of an holy life; an assurance of eternal bliss. All his laws likewise whereby he governs us, not only give inward peace and satisfaction to our minds when we are ruled by them, but the happiness of our bodies, and of our families, and of whole kingdoms and churches, inseparably twisted with the faithful observance of them. For by these we come to be united in the most sweet and pleasing relations of families and friends. Nay, his whole religion, if we would receive it, secures the rarest friendship among men that is imaginable. It sows the seeds of love and kindness, of peaceableness and Christian communion, of mercifulness and good works in their highest perfection; which must needs spring up into such a familiarity, as the heathens themselves accounted the greatest blessing in the world.

There is nothing more demonstrable than this, and it is no less plain that as all his spiritual blessings draw temporal along with them, so likewise the outward blessings he bestows are intended as pledges, not only of more mercies of the same kind, but likewise of diviner and nobler favours to our souls.

There is no deliverance he gives us from temporal calamities, but he designs shall draw us nearer to him, who is the fountain of all good. He would give us himself together with it; he would fill us with his love, and increase our confidence in his goodness, and make us more fruitful in all good works; and dispose us to such a sense of him and of our duty, that we may be every way happy, together with all those who enjoy the same blessing in common with us.

This is the use we ought to make of all the marvellous works of God which have been done among us, far surpassing all our expectations. They declare that God is near us. He comes to

see what entertainment we will give him. He opens the door to see how we are disposed to receive him. But let us not presume; he is only *near*, we may put him away and his mercy from us. We may shut the door against those divine blessings, those heavenly graces, which he would introduce into our hearts.

3. On these let us set our affections; and since God's presence with a people is the greatest matter of praise, as these words intimate, (for he gives thanks for God's wondrous works upon this account, because they declared him to be with them,) let this be the principal cause of our joy this day; because we hope true religion will be more than ever promoted, unfeigned godliness countenanced, profaneness and debauchery everywhere curbed, regular and orderly piety encouraged, all our unnatural heats quenched, and our rigours abated; brotherly love and kindness, peace and concord firmly established.

For if we rejoice merely because we hope peace and quietness will be secured, plenty and abundance flow in upon us, trade and commerce quickened, riches increase and grow to a greater height, and the strength and power of the nation much exalted: we may justly fear we shall have none of these long to rejoice in; but God will find some way, as unexpected as our deliverance, to punish us for our ingratitude to him.

Did not Jerusalem presume it was for ever secured, after such a miraculous preservation as that in the days of Hezekiah, for which the Psalmist, it is probable, in my text gives the highest thanks to God? And yet this very city, in process of time, was burned with fire, (not to mention the preceding calamities before this came,) the temple destroyed, and the people carried captive into a strange land.

And after God had inspired the heart of Cyrus to send them back to their own country, and given them such favour in the sight of the heathen, that they built their city and their temple again, and grew a very great nation; it is very likely that sleepy and careless minds might dream they were now under such a peculiar care of Heaven, that no evil should henceforth befal them. And yet they were again miserably harassed and afflicted by Antiochus, with a rage against them that differed little from madness.

The very same confusions hath impiety made in the Christian

world, and that by the hands of contemptible instruments. Those that they despised and thought themselves able to resist (though they had been far stronger than they were) got the mastery of them, when the sins of Christians had taken their defence and protection from them.

Many examples of which have been observed by divers authors out of Salvian[z]. "What was it," saith he, "that abandoned Spain to the Vandals? Were they the strongest of all the barbarous nations? No such matter; but God would show these two things: first, how much he hated the lusts of the flesh; for he delivered the impure, filthy Spaniards into the hands of a chaste people; and then he put them under the yoke of the weakest enemies; that he might show it is not strength which prevails, but something else: they being overrun, not by the force of their sluggish enemies, but by the power of their own vices."

And how came France also to be vanquished? Why, at that time it was but one great gulf of riot, one brothel house of filthiness and uncleanness.

And when some objected and said, These Goths and Vandals are all Arian heretics: sure God will give us the better, who are good Christian catholics. "Alas!" replies that good father, "what a folly is it to rely on this fancy! What! do you talk of being good catholics, when almost all religion is derided by us? What can the prerogative of a religious name profit us? What good can it do us to boast that we are the faithful, and they the heretics, when we live as wickedly as the wickedest heresy can make us; and we ourselves could be no worse, if our opinions were as bad as theirs?"

Once more, how came these people to take the confidence to invade Afric? Had they an infinite number of legions, whereby they might hope to prevail? No, we are expressly told by good authors, that they were very small forces wherewith they wafted themselves over to those shores. But it was an hand from above (saith Salvian) which carried them thither, to punish the horrid vices of those countries: the whole territory of Africa being nothing else than one huge house, wherein all vices met and dwelt together.

[z] [De Gubern. Dei, lib. vii. cap. 7. in Biblioth. vet. Patr. Gallandii. tom. x. p. 42.]

It is a madness then (unless we could show some privilege and protection we have, to secure us from those punishments which have come upon others) to plunge ourselves into those vices; that irreligion, that filthiness, that debauchery which hath undone so many.

They are the more deadly in us after such a deliverance as this. They will cry to heaven for vengeance on such miscreants as are not satisfied to have undone a kingdom once or twice; but, in defiance of all that they have seen with their eyes, as well as of what they have heard from the report of ancient times, will proceed on still in their trespasses, to undo it over again.

God of his infinite mercies enlighten our eyes, that we may see these things; and strike our hearts, that we may consider them; and implant in us such a reverend sense of himself and of his righteous providence, that we may fear before him, and obey him for our good, all the days of our lives. Amen.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN

AT WHITEHALL,

MARCH 1, $168\frac{8}{9}$.

Published by her Majesty's special command.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN.

Coloss. iii. 15.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

IN these words three things offer themselves to our consideration:

First, a duty, which is, to *let the peace of God rule in our hearts.*

Secondly, the reason of it, which is double. First, we are *called* to it. Secondly, we are called to it *in one body.*

Thirdly, a means or help hereunto, *and be ye thankful.*

I.

In the first of these also there are three things to be considered:

1. The grace itself here commended to us, which is *peace.*
2. The excellency of this grace, it is *the peace of God.*
3. The authority it ought to exercise over us, *let it rule in your hearts.*

I. For the first of these, peace doth not here signify that quiet and satisfaction which we have in our minds and consciences from a sense of well-doing, and of God's gracious promise thereunto; but one part of well-doing, from which that inward peace and comfort flows, viz. the grace of peaceableness. Wherein we consult the quiet of other men as well as our own, and live in an undisturbed union with them.

Which is a grace compounded of several other graces, principally, humility and kindness, meekness and patience. The two first of which (humility and kindness) dispose us to avoid the giving any offence to others; and the two last (meekness

and patience) dispose us to pass by the offences that others give to us: by which means peace is both made and maintained both in private and public, in civil and Christian society.

For peace being that grace which preserves us from variance with our neighbours, and clashing one against another, to the great prejudice of all society, it teaches us, as I said, to avoid all those things whereby we may offend other men, and to keep ourselves in such good temper as not to be too much offended at those things whereby they give disgust to us.

These are the things which cause all variance, and make all the breaches that are among neighbours; the offences which are either given or taken. Which peace instructs us equally to shun, and is itself instructed by humility and kindness to shun the giving any, and by meekness and patience to shun the taking any offences when they are given.

It is ill-natured pride and insolence which makes men give trouble and disturbance unto those who would live quietly with them; and it is too much passion and impatience which makes others unable to bear with such provocation.

Both must be amended before we can come into the way of peace. The first, by humble thoughts of ourselves, and by being *kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love*, (as the apostle speaks.) The second, by meek putting up injuries, by forbearance, and patient suffering the insolent folly of abusive persons.

These two put us into the way of peace, and will keep us in it, either by preventing differences, or by composing them. For differences there will be (and my text supposes as much) as long as men's apprehensions of things are very various; yet they may be without the breach of peace. Which doth not hinder all manner of differences, but only compose them by an overruling hand, as you shall hear presently, when I have given a short account of the second thing under this head.

II. Which is, the excellence of this grace, here called the *peace of God;* that is, a divine quality of which God is the author, who works it in the hearts of true Christians; as a part of his own image which he dearly loves, and wherein he exceedingly delights.

In all these regards it is the peace of God; because it springs from him: and is a communication of his own divine

nature, which renders us very like him and makes us highly beloved of him; who is the most excellent Being, and delights in this name, the God of peace and love. For in his most blessed nature there is no discord nor dissension; but all the three persons perfectly agree, and entirely accord, being externally united in the same will as well as essence.

Unto which pattern our Lord and Saviour tells his apostles God intended to form their minds; that *they all might be one, as he and the Father are one*[a]. And the apostles endeavoured to make the same happy accord among all Christians, that they might *all speak the same thing, and that there might be no divisions among them; but that they might be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*[b].

And when we are thus joined together in peace and love, then are we perfect men in Christ Jesus, and in a singular manner beloved of God; unto whom nothing is so grateful as this, whereby we make the nearest approaches unto his divine nature.

By this small touch I have given upon this subject, (which I have not room to prosecute,) you cannot but see there is the greatest reason that we should not only admit this heavenly guest into our hearts, but let them be absolutely governed by it. Which is the third thing.

III. The authority it ought to have over us; which should be so great, that it command, and have the dominion of all other affections that stir in our souls. For so the apostle saith, *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*

The word in the Greek for *rule* relates to contests and controversies; in which the peace of God ought to interpose so powerfully as to quiet them, that they give no disturbance to the Christian society. So the words may literally be translated, *Let the peace of God be umpire in you.* That is, when any disputes arise about which ye cannot agree, but are in danger to fall into parties and break in pieces; then refer all unto peace, as you do your differences to an arbitrator. As much as to say, Let that be concluded which will make most for peace. Let it determine every controversy, moderate in all differences, be instead of a judge to decide and settle all things

[a] John xvii. 21. [b] 1 Cor. i. 10.

in dispute; which will soon be at an end, if you do but think with yourselves what will make most for the peace of the church, or the kingdom where you live, and resolve to let that prevail.

In order unto which we must let it quell all those unruly passions which upon such occasions are wont to rise up in our hearts. Anger may begin to boil, pride and ambition to swell, self-love and interest to make a bustle and bestir themselves; but then the love of peace and quietness ought to get uppermost, and bear the greatest sway in our hearts; so as to overrule and keep down all other affections, which would be troubling us and others.

This is the apostle's meaning, and thus the holy men of God understood him; who were content to sacrifice any thing but the Christian faith to peace and quietness. Concerning which there is an excellent discourse in the Epistle of Clemens (one of the apostle's immediate successors) to the church of Corinth. Where he shows that those contentions which began in St. Paul's days, and could not, it seems, be suppressed by the apostolical authority alone, would have immediately been subdued and quashed by the peace of God, if it had been grafted and borne rule in their hearts.

"Who is there," saith he[c], "that is of a generous spirit among you? Who is there that hath any bowels of compassion? Who that is full of charity? Let him say if this sedition be for my sake; if this contention, these schisms, be upon my account, I am gone, I depart whither you please. There is nothing that shall be enjoined me but I will do it. Only let the flock of Christ be in peace, with the elders that are set over it...Thus they who live that life which is never to be repented of have done, and will do...For we have known many, who, to be the authors of liberty to others, have thrown themselves into bonds: and many have left their own cities, that there might be no strife and contention about them."

And what he saith godly men would do hereafter, according as others had done before them, for peace sake, was fulfilled, as we find in the monuments of the church. Where there are examples of such self-denial as made them desire (to use the

[c] [§ 54, 5, apud Coteler. Patr. Apost. tom. i. pp. 177, 8.]

words of one of them) to be thrown into the sea, like Jonas rather than have the tempest which was raised upon their account continue to disturb the church. Thus I could show some have done since in later ages. And if we had the same humble, the same tenderhearted, charitable, and truly generous spirit, we should think it the greatest glory to submit all our particular concerns to the government of peace, and not let them prevail to the making any public disturbance, no, nor private quarrels with our neighbours.

Unto which we are now so prone, that we fall out even about a trifling opinion, wherein we differ one from another. The reason is, because we are too full of ourselves, and too void of charity and the peace of God: which if it did possess our hearts, we should not be so much wedded as we are to our own opinions, much less indulge our passions; but resign them all to be ruled and ordered by this grace, which teaches us to be of a yielding spirit, as far as piety will permit.

Nay, if our passion and our pride were kept under, we should not be impatient to be contradicted, nor think ourselves bound to engage in the defence of every thing that we judge to be true, nor to rise up against every thing that we judge to be false; but endure without disturbance the contrary opinions of others, which may seem untrue to us, if they do no great hurt to the world.

Were we possessed with this desire alone, to make others better, we should not trouble ourselves about every error and mistake, if the remedy will prove worse than the disease; that is, breed quarrels, and break the peace, by endless disputes and jarrings about it. Our blessed Saviour himself, the Prince of peace, did not undertake to free men from every error whatsoever, but those only which concerned the means of their salvation.

And in such matters, when we are constrained to declare our dissent from others, who are, we apprehend, in dangerous errors, the peace of God teaches us to do it in such sweet and gentle manner, that they may see we aim only at their good, and they may not by our rough treating them take occasion of disgust, not only unto us, but to the truth also which we defend. For we oftentimes give distaste to others, and make them irreconcilable, not so much by our contrary opinion, as by

a fierce, insolent, presumptuous, and disdainful way of proposing our own opinion, and opposing theirs.

But it is far worse when we come to terms of contempt and reproach; which are commonly observed to make such breaches as are never to be repaired.

The peace of God teaches us quite another lesson; and constrains us to compassionate the weaknesses of our brethren, to treat them with tenderness as well as humanity; and when they are peevish, and passionate, and prone to quarrel, even then to bear with them, and meekly reduce them to a better temper.

For the weaknesses of our brethren make them objects of our pity, not of our anger. And they are never more to be pitied, than when they cannot be cured by our charitable compassion and forbearance of them. Unto which we shall be the more inclined, if we consider that we are men also, and may possibly fall into the same error, and commit the same faults: and then what we tolerate in them, it will be their turn to bear withal in us. But especially if we consider that we are Christians, who lie under this law, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*[c]. Which law of charity and peace being not fulfilled, is the cause of all the vexatious disturbances that are in the world.

We do not mind this Christian obligation, to *bear one another's burdens.* We have other inclinations than to obey the will of our blessed Lord. We seek ourselves, our own glory, our own pleasure, our own interest and satisfaction in every thing; and are not satisfied with this, that God is glorified, our Saviour honoured, piety promoted, the church edified, by our patience, by our peaceableness, by our forbearance one of another; and by our studying the good of our neighbours as the greatest contentment to ourselves.

Thus I have explained the first part of my text, the duty: which I have pressed the more earnestly, because strife and contention will spoil all the fastings and humiliations of this season; nay, utterly defeat our very prayers and supplications. Which then will obtain of the God of all mercy that perfect remission and forgiveness which we beg of him, when they dispose us to be *merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful;*

[c] Gal. vi. 2.

to be *kind one to another*, (as the apostle speaks,) *tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*[d].

Come we now to the second part, which is the reason whereby the apostle urges this duty.

II.

And that is double, as you heard. First, we are called to it. Secondly, we are called to it in one body.

I. For the first of these, it suggests to us three obligations; whereby we are bound to be peaceable. First, by the preaching of the gospel to us. Secondly, by the special favour which God has done us therein. Thirdly, by the high honour he hath also conferred upon us in making us partakers of his heavenly calling.

1. First, I say, *calling* is a word which relates to the preaching of the gospel, by which we were *called unto belief of the truth*[e]; and by that truth not only taught, but required *to be at peace among ourselves*[f], and to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*[g]. Nay, *if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men*[h]; or, if they refuse it, yet to *follow peace with all men*[i], *to seek peace and ensue it*[k].

Finally, brethren, (as St. Paul writes,) *be perfect*, (i. e. complete Christians,) *be of good comfort* (or receive this word of exhortation), *be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you*[l]: that is, as we desire and hope for the favour and love of God, and for all the blessed effects and fruits thereof, we are bound to live in peace. For he is the God of peace and love: and his Son is the Prince of peace; who left peace with his church, as his last legacy, when he left the world: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*[m]. And his gospel is the *gospel of peace*, the *word of reconciliation*, which instructs us in that heavenly wisdom *which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated*[n], or *easily persuaded* unto those things which make for peace, though therein we deny our own will and particular interest.

[d] Ephes. iv. 32.
[e] 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.
[f] 1 Thess. v. 13.
[g] Ephes. iv. 3.
[h] Rom. xii. 18.
[i] Heb. xii. 14.
[k] 1 Pet. iii. 11.
[l] 2 Cor. xiii. 11.
[m] John xiv. 27.
[n] James iii. 17.

This is the genius of that religion unto which we are called by the preaching of Christ's gospel.

2. And it was the greatest favour and grace that Heaven could bestow upon us, to communicate unto us the knowledge of his will, and to make us of this heavenly spirit; for so the word *calling* is sometimes used in Scripture for the free grace and bounty of God, in opposition to any work of ours whereby we could deserve it; as in Rom. ix. 11, *That the purpose of God might stand, not of works, but of him that called*, that is, mercifully dispensed the benefit according to his own free will and good pleasure.

We do not understand our own happiness, nor the great grace of God to us, if we do not think ourselves highly obliged to him, in commanding and disposing us, by the gospel of his grace, to be peaceably minded; that is, to be, as I said, of an heavenly spirit: for what other notion can we frame of the happiness of those above, but that they live in perfect love of God and of one another, without any discord or contention which would disturb their blessed repose? For having all the very same end and design, the very same affections and desires, which are to do honour to God, and to promote one another's good, there can be no rupture, nor so much as quarrelling or dissension among them; which arise from men's private desires and aims, and the cross interests which they pursue in this present world.

And therefore the more perfectly we divest our minds of all selfishness, and bend our thoughts to study the common good, the nearer we shall approach to their blessed state; and the fitter we shall be for the company of happy souls and spirits, by such a sweet concord and agreement here, as reigns in the peaceable society of heavenly minds in the other world.

And on the contrary, while we live in wrath and bitterness, in pride and disdain one of another, and thereby are engaged in perpetual contests and quarrelsome differences, pursuing one another with a deadly hatred, we are of the same nature and disposition with the infernal ghosts, the devil and his angels: and if we go out of the world in this wretched temper of mind, (which cannot be changed in a moment,) we fall unavoidably into their troublesome company; who could not be quiet even in heaven itself, but there raised such a faction and disturbance, that they were thrust down from that blessed place, and

condemned to keep one another company in endless misery and despair.

And one great part of their misery, we all apprehend, is that they are ever restless and unquiet, unalterably bent to trouble and torment themselves, by contriving how to make disturbance among others.

Which shows what a kindness our blessed Saviour hath done us in calling us unto peace; and thereby redeeming us from the society of those rancorous spirits, unto whom we are so strongly linked, while we are of a turbulent and untractable spirit, that we must necessarily fall into their company when we depart from hence, if we be not cured of this disease, and have our natures altered into the peaceable mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. By which we understand, thirdly, the honour also our Lord hath done us in calling us to be peaceable; for this the word *calling* implies in Rom. xi. 29, *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance:* where *calling* is the great preferment God designed for Abraham's family, and to which accordingly he advanced them: wherein he intended immutably to have continued them, if they had believed on him, as Abraham did.

And indeed we are called to a very high dignity, by being called unto peace; for it entitles us to the honour of being the children of the Most High. So our Saviour instructs us in his sermon upon the mount: *Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God* [o].

Peacemakers are peaceable minded men. For as *to make a lie*, in Scripture language, is to be given to lying, and to make a practice of it; so to *make peace* is to have a strong constant inclination to it, and to bend that way upon all occasions. Which is a divine disposition, and makes us like to God: so like him, that we may thereby be known to be his offspring; who are endued with his most excellent nature, and act by his spirit; and therefore shall be partakers of his blessedness.

This is the sum of the first part of the reason: we do not answer the gracious design of the gospel, and the great kindness and honour Christ hath done us, if we do not let the peace

[o] Matt. v. 9.

of God rule in our hearts; unto which we are called in one body.

II. That is the second part of it: we are therefore called unto peace, because we are called to be *one body*, of which Christ is the head.

When we were made Christians, we were not brought into that state to live separately and distinctly, every one of us by ourselves, as our particular fancies and affections shall incline us; but to be knit together in one Christian society, every part of which is to seek his own good interest and safety, by preserving the whole in peace and quietness, without any rupture in the body of Christ. For by that the body is destroyed, as by union of the members it is maintained and preserved.

There is nothing plainer than that no society can subsist, unless they who belong to it, as members of it, live peaceably together; as the members of the natural body do, which are made to love and have a care one of another, and keep all together, without any division; for that certainly tends to its dissolution. But above all others, the Christian body, or society, is disposed and bound hereunto by its very constitution, and by various obligations.

As for its constitution; it is founded upon the law of love and kindness, and mutual care of each other; by which our Saviour hath told us all his disciples are to be known, as by their very badge and proper character.

And as for their obligation; St. Paul reckons up a great number of things wherein we are united, and thereby tied *to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body* [p]; that is the first and general obligation: and what can be more unnatural, than for the members of the same body to quarrel and fall out, and tear one another in pieces? *and one Spirit*, (that is the second,) the Spirit of love and truth, which suggests the same peaceable inclinations to every one that it doth to any one; and what more unchristian than to throw off the government of this one heavenly guide, and to live as if we were severally acted by so many infernal furies?

Even as we are called in one hope of our calling, (that is the third,) we must all be friends in heaven, if we ever meet

[p] Ephes. iv. 5, 6.

there; why do we bite then, and devour one another in the way thither?

One Lord, (that is the next,) who redeemed us all at the same rate of his own most precious blood: and is it agreeable to this relation for the servants of the same Master to make disturbance, nay, confusion in his family? Is this, think you, for his service? Or can it turn to our good account when he reckons with us?

One faith, delivered to us by his apostles; how come we to fall out about that which teaches us to agree? For *faith worketh by love*, as the apostle speaks [q].

One baptism, whereby we are received into Christ's family upon the same terms and conditions. "We are marked with the same cognizance, (as an excellent writer of our own glosses upon it [r],) we use the same word, we march under the same banner;" how come we to mistake one another for enemies?

Lastly, there is *one God and Father of all, who is above all*, by his most excellent nature; *and through all*, by his providence and care of the whole world, especially of every member of the church; *and in all*, by the operations of his grace in our hearts. For Christians then to contend, and quarrel, and fight, what is it but to divide this one God, to commit him against himself, to disown his government, to cross his motions, to refuse to follow the conduct of his grace, which works in us; and, by abandoning ourselves unto our own passions, to throw ourselves out of his fatherly care of us and favour towards us, and to expose ourselves to all the sin and all the mischief unto which the malice of the evil spirit can hurry us?

Behold here not one or two alone, but seven bands of unity and peace among Christians: whereby they are tied to such mutual care of each other's welfare, that they cannot vex, much less destroy one another, unless they forget all these obligations, and break these bands in sunder.

Nay, there is not a leaf in the whole book of God (wherein we read these things) but it teaches us this blessed accord. The very body of the holy Scriptures, we might easily see if we did observe, from the one end of them to the other, is a most lively image and type of this *unity of the Spirit in the*

[q] Gal. v. 6.

[r] Bishop Bramhall's Answer to S. W. ["Schism guarded," part i. sect. viii. vol. ii. p. 320.]

bond of peace, which the apostle commends unto us in this place. For though the writers of them lived in divers ages, in distant places, and were of different tempers; yet they all most admirably agree together, having the very same relish in their writings; carrying on the same design, and aiming at the self-same end; without the least ground for suspicion that they had any private respect to themselves.

Let us but remember then that we have so many ties upon us, and endeavour to have a feeling of them; and then, as the consideration that we are members of the same civil society moves us to be at peace one with another in the state, which cannot otherways subsist, but must be dissolved; so the serious consideration that we are members of the same sacred body of Christ, linked together by so many strong ligaments, will much more move us to study the peace of his church; which cannot be preserved but by a firm union of those parts of which it consists and is made up.

To end this, let it be considered that *the peace of God* here mentioned is a branch of charity, as appears by the foregoing words, *And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts*[s], &c. Which tell us that peace is the natural effect and product of a lively and sincere love in the heart; especially of such a love as is between the members of the same body.

1. For we naturally fear to do any harm to those we love: and it is from the injuries we do one another, of several sorts, that abundance of quarrels and contentions arise among us.

2. But suppose any hurt be done, the affection we have to those whom we dearly love disposes to look upon all the faults we commit against them as great, and all that they commit against us as small. Which stops up the very source of quarrels; which, for the most part, spring from those false ideas which make all things that concern ourselves look very big, and those that concern other men seem very little.

3. Nay, we are so far from being disposed to hurt those we love, that we cannot but perceive an inclination we have to serve and succour them the best we are able. Which it is not

[s] Ver. 14.

possible for us to do, unless we be at peace with them. For peace is the very gate by which we enter into their hearts, which is barred against us when men have an aversion for us, and are upon terms of enmity or opposition to us. Therefore if we be bound to help, we are bound to be at peace one with another. And all that have any sense of humanity cannot but confess that we are made by God to be helpful one to another: which Christianity cannot but make us more sensibly acknowledge: because of the ardent love which, above all things, it commends to us; and is nowhere so strong as between members of the same body; especially of such a body as theirs, which hath Christ for its head, and the Spirit of God for its soul and life. Which inclines them and powerfully moves them to hold all together in love and peace, as the only means of preserving and edifying the body of Christ, and also of perfecting it for the happy rest of the other world.

Thus I have given a brief account of the reasons for this duty. Which sufficiently commends itself to us, in that it is the peace of God: but the apostle presses it from this consideration also, that we are *called to it in one body.*

III.

I proceed now to the last part of my text, the means or help (as I understand it) which the apostle prescribes for the introducing and increasing the *peace of God*, and giving it the rule over our hearts: which is contained in these words, *and be ye thankful.*

We are very apt, as you have heard, to be disgusted at many things which are disagreeable to us; from whence arises much disquiet, discontent, and sometimes quarrels with those who give us such distaste. But if we would spend that time in recounting God's mercies to us, and giving him our solemn thanks for them, which we spend in complaining, in finding fault one with another, and aggravating every thing which displeases us, we should be perfectly cured of those distempers; and ashamed to make such a bustle and stir as we are wont to do about such small things as now disquiet us.

Thankfulness, we all agree, is a Christian duty as much as any other.

And not only a duty enjoined us by God, but to which we

are inclined by nature; if our hearts be touched with the least sense of his divine benefits.

And that it is very pleasant and delightful, as all natural motions are, every one may feel, who pleases to make a trial.

And no less profitable and beneficial, we must needs acknowledge, because he invites a new benefit who most gratefully acknowledges the old.

And lastly, (to omit the rest,) we cannot but confess that nothing more becomes us than thankfulness, because we have nothing originally of ourselves, but all purely from God. Which makes it the most decent thing in the world to be paying him our perpetual acknowledgments.

Or if there should be any one so perverse as not to be sensible of this, he cannot but yield that it is far more decent and becoming than perpetual complaints and discontents, brawlings and scoldings one with another about every petty difference.

Far more agreeable, I am sure, to the Christian spirit, (if we know what that is,) more beseeming those who lie under infinite obligations to God our Saviour, which challenge our highest and incessant praises; than it is to murmur and repine, to find faults and pick quarrels, to contend and strive; which end too oft in fighting and destroying one another.

We may well be ashamed then and confounded at our folly and disingenuity, if we do not live in a sincere practice of this duty; which, if we do, will be an effectual means to suppress all such unseemly behaviour as that above mentioned; because it strikes at the very root of all discontent, and wrath, and pride, and such like evil affections, which gave disturbance unto us and unto others.

We cannot easily be discontented about any thing, when we set ourselves seriously to consider how many blessings, both temporal and spiritual, past, present, and to come, we stand indebted for to the Divine bounty; and accordingly *offer to him the sacrifice of praise continually, giving thanks unto his name.*

We shall soon suppress anger and rage at those that offend us, when we remember with due thankfulness, as we ought to do perpetually, how oft we have provoked God, and have been mercifully forborne and forgiven by his patient and longsuffering goodness towards us.

The swellings of pride will presently go down, when thankfulness puts us in mind that we are nothing, nor have any thing of our own, but depend wholly upon God: who can soon humble us, and lay us low, if we be forgetful of his bounty to us.

All harshness and severity will be abated by the thoughts of God's lenity, compassion, and kind dealing with us; there will be no room for fretting envy to trouble us or molest others: but it will be immediately thrust out of doors when this thought comes into our mind, and fills our heart with devout affections to God, that we are in a far better condition than we deserve, and, if we be ungrateful, may fear to be in a worse.

In short, all those graces from whence (I observed in the beginning) the peace of God springs, are manifestly maintained and nourished by continual thankfulness to God for all his benefits. In which if we exercise ourselves, it will give the *peace of God* the government of us; by making us humble and courteous, mild and gentle, kind and merciful, meek and patient; which are the natural qualities of a truly thankful Christian.

Let us make this then our constant employment and our delight, and look upon a thankful heart as "a great treasure (to use the words of St. Chrysostom [p],) inestimable riches, a good of which none can rob us, armour of defence against all temptations."

I.

And first, as we are *men who live together in the same neighbourhood*, let us be thankful to God for all the good we receive one by another; and then we shall the easier pass by any evil that is done us, because it is small and inconsiderable in comparison with the good we do, or may receive, by our neighbourly living together in one society, family, parish, or city.

There is not the meanest man among us who doth not some way or other serve the greatest; God having so made this world, that we should be helpful one to another in our several ranks and conditions; nay, that one sort of men should not be able comfortably to subsist without the service of the rest.

Which if we did consider, we should perceive so many and great

[p] Hom. 1. ad Pop. Antioch. [tom. ii. p. 18 C.]

benefits we reap thereby, that it would make us confess we have great reason to be thankful to the Creator and wise Disposer of all things: and that thankfulness would moderate all the disgusts we take one at another, which disturb our private peace and quietness.

Nay, the benefits we receive by some men are so very considerable, that if we were not extremely ungrateful, we could not be so apt as we are to find fault with every thing we do not like in them; but for the sake of the greater good they do us, should wink at, or rather not mind, the smaller faults we see or fancy in them. With which we are wont to be so distasted as to forget all the excellent qualities they are endowed withal, and the great service they do to all mankind.

II.

But if we enlarged our thoughts beyond these bounds, and considered ourselves as members of the same kingdom, we should find so many obligations to be thankful to God for the invaluable blessings of order and government; that it would mightily appease that heat and violence which is very troublesome to us and others, when our passions begin to raise a commotion, and to make us displeased with the present settlement.

For it is by the protection and favour of the public government that we eat, and drink, and sleep, and do all other things in safety.

Which thought alone is sufficient to quiet us when our spirits begin to fret and be tumultuous; that is, to quarrel with our happiness.

III.

But let us still further make ourselves sensible of the far nobler benefits which we enjoy by being Christians, and be truly thankful to God for them, more particularly for his great grace in calling us to be one body in Christ; and thereby calling us unto peace one with another, and to peace with him the *God of peace*, (who will be with us, as I have said, while we continue perfectly joined together in the same mind and spirit,) and then we shall not have the heart to give the least disturbance unto this blessed society of the church of God: but with united affection study to preserve it, and to promote the honour of it by the most ardent love and kindness, tenderness and

compassion, one towards another; especially in that part of it where we live.

Read the pathetical exhortation of the apostle in the verses foregoing, upon which my text depends; and it will be impossible not to have your heart affected with it, if you attend unto it, and ponder every word: *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity,* &c.

What if you did read these verses deliberately every morning, before you went about any other business? It would not take up much of your time, nor cost you much pains, unless it be in laying them to heart, and laying them up in your hearts. But whatsoever labour you bestow in that, it will be abundantly recompensed in the benefit you and others will receive by it; if this small portion of *the word of Christ dwell in you richly,* (as it follows immediately after my text,) and dispose you to continue in this heavenly temper all the day long.

And how can you choose but be so disposed, if you consider how much you are bound to God for his inestimable benefits bestowed upon you, in making you his *elect, holy and beloved?* Ponder these three words seriously, and look upon yourselves as *elect* of God, that is, *chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth* (as he speaks 2 Thess. ii. 13); *holy,* that is, separated from the profane world to be his devoted servants; *beloved,* that is, made partakers of the greatest kindness heaven could do us in sending his Son to save us; and then you will not be able to reject the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, *Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour*[q].

IV.

Especially when we remember that we are not bare Christians, but reformed Christians, whose principles lead to unity and peace more than the principles of any other Christians whatsoever.

[q] Ephes. v. 1, 2.

For the very basis of the reformed religion is this, that all necessary truths are not only contained in the holy Scriptures, but evidently and plainly set down there. Which single truth being agreed, it is manifest there must needs be an unity of opinions among us in all things necessary.

And as for other things which are not evident in the holy Scriptures, and therefore are not necessary; what should hinder, but that notwithstanding any different opinions about them, there may be among us an unity of affection. Unto which the holy Scriptures direct and press us, as the most necessary duty, and as the greatest happiness of which this world is capable.

For there is nothing the gospel urges so much as kindness, forbearance, tender compassion one of another: such kindness as, making us look upon one another as brethren, and fellow-members, will not let us break all the bonds of friendship that are between us.

For why should there be any breach among those who are agreed in this plain principle, that there being unity of opinion among them in all things necessary, in things not necessary unity of opinion is not necessary, but only unity of affection? Which will make us study and embrace the means of our common preservation, by mutual condescension to such terms of agreement as will establish a firm and undisturbed peace among us.

In which if there should happen any breach, the same spirit of love and goodness will dispose us immediately to make it up, by not adhering too stiffly to our own private opinions, much less to any worldly interest; which must be laid aside by all peaceable-minded men, that is, by all good Christians.

Who ought not to engage in fierce oppositions, much less in confident censuring and condemning one another; but with all humility, modesty, and calmness, endeavour each other's information: or, if that cannot be obtained, patiently to bear with one another's infirmities, according to the forenamed golden rule of St. Paul, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*[q].

The law of Christ, that is, his peculiar law, is the law of love, which he calls *a new commandment*[r]; and *his* command-

[q] Gal. vi. 2. [r] John xiii. 34.

ment, *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you*[s]. Which we then fulfil or perfectly observe, when it makes us *bear one another's burdens*, that is, offences; whether they be infirmities or sins.

For as long as there are any hopes of amendment, we ought (as the apostle there teaches in the verse foregoing) *if any man be overtaken with a fault, to restore such a one with the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.* That is, we must tenderly admonish such offenders, study in the kindest and softest manner to reclaim them; which is no small labour and trouble indeed; but thereby we in the properest sense take part of their burden upon ourselves, whilst we seek by such charitable means to rid them of it.

V.

And now, if, in the last place, we make ourselves sensible that we are such reformed Christians as have been lately saved and delivered in a wonderful manner from the hands of those that designed our destruction, it will raise our thankfulness to such a height, that it will surmount all those clouds which overcast our joy in God and in his salvation.

For what a blessing is it, that we have the liberties of our holy religion, and meet here together in peace and quietness, without the least apprehension of such dangers as not long ago hung over us! If we had been deprived of it, should we not have accounted the loss to be invaluable? What is the matter then, that we do not set the greatest price upon the enjoyment? Is it nothing to be delivered from those fears wherewith we were lately surrounded? What should we think if God should throw us back again into them? But there is a great deal more to be thankful for, which is the hopes we have that this blessed liberty will be continued and secured to us and to our posterity after us. Which will derive a blessing likewise upon all other protestant churches abroad; whose safety lies in our preservation.

Nay, this one single reflection, that we have had the happiness to behold a protestant king and queen, here worshipping God together in this place, (a sight, which if it hath been ever seen in England, yet not these seventy years,) is enough to

[s] John xv. 12.

transport us with such joy as should make us quite forget all our differences and discontents. And let us think of nothing else, but *what we shall render to the Lord for such benefits as he hath bestowed upon us.*

For which we can never thank him enough, and therefore let us thank him continually.

Evening and morning, and noon, let us give our solemn thanks unto him. Yea,

Let us *bless the Lord at all times; let his praise be ever in our mouths.*

When we sit in our house, (as Moses speaks in another case,) when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up, let us be *talking of all his wondrous works:* saying, with the Psalmist,

Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can show forth all his praise?

Thy righteousness (or goodness), *O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee?*

Thou art great and dost wondrous things: thou art God alone.

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart: I will glorify thy name for evermore.

For great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell, (i. e. the extremest dangers.)

Therefore shall my tongue speak of thy righteousness, and of thy praise all the day long.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart; secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation.

For the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

Now the God of all grace grant unto every soul of us such truly thankful hearts, that we may be always praising him and speaking good of his name: and then the *peace of God* will rule and govern us, unto which we are *called in one body* by Christ Jesus. To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be eternal praises. Amen.

A SERMON

AGAINST MURMURING,

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 17. 168$\frac{8}{9}$.

A SERMON

AGAINST MURMURING.

1 Cor. x. 10.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

AMONG the many demonstrations we have of the Infinite goodness to us, this is the greatest; that he hath been pleased, out of the excess of his kindness, to leave no way untried, to omit no means that hath any force in it, to reduce us unto the obedience we owe his Majesty, and thereby bring us to everlasting happiness. For this end he sent his own dear Son among us; who dying for us, and rising again, sent the Holy Ghost, by whom the apostles were instructed and empowered to call us back to God, both by injunctions and exhortations and beseechings; by promises of eternal life if we hearken to them, and threatening of eternal death if we refuse to obey them.

And because some minds are so dull, at least at certain seasons, that they are little moved with the hope and fear of rewards and punishments so far off as the other world; therefore, together with those future things, they represent the present advantages or mischiefs which attend upon our good or bad behaviour towards God in this world, who invites us to obedience by the memorable examples of those who were faithful to him, and followed him fully; whom he therefore extraordinarily blessed, and multiplied his mercies on them, as persons highly in his favour: and, on the other side, deters us from rebellious works by the fearful examples of those who, being an untoward, faithless, and stubborn generation, were therefore as remarkably punished with one severe judgment after another, till they were utterly consumed.

Of this last sort the old Israelites were the most famous instance; who having received singular favours from God, by whom they were brought out of Egypt, carried through the Red Sea under the protection of a glorious cloud, baptized there into Moses, did all eat the same spiritual meat, and drank the same spiritual drink, yet proved the most ungrateful of all men living; and not only forgat his benefits, but turned them into wantonness and rebellion against him: for which cause *he was not well pleased with many of them; for they were overthrown in the wilderness,* into which he had brought them by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, in order to their settlement in the land of Canaan.

All this you read in the five first verses of this chapter; from whence the apostle proceeds to warn all Christians, by their disastrous fall, to take good heed to themselves, and not to fancy the case was now altered under the discipline of Christ. No such matter: *These things,* saith he, ver. 6, *were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; neither be idolaters, as were some of them,* ver. 7, nor *commit fornication,* ver. 8, nor *tempt Christ,* ver. 9, *neither murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. For all these things happened unto them for ensamples,* (or types of what shall befall us,) *and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,* ver. 11, 12. As much as to say, If ye do as they did, expect to suffer as they did: do not presume upon the grace and favour of Christ, nor imagine you are so settled in it, that, do what you can, you shall not fall from it; for he will not bear you out in evil courses, but proceed against you according to these former precedents of the Divine vengeance upon an ungrateful people.

Now the ingratitude of the old Israelites appeared in nothing more than in their murmuring; which the apostle here mentions in the last place, as the very upshot of all their provocations: and I have chosen to treat of it at this time, because this sin, which in itself is most unworthy, and in its effects very dangerous, is, I fear, too common, and yet very slightly passed over, without a particular repentance for it, in this age wherein we live.

In handling of which, I shall, first, show what it is to *murmur;* secondly, whence it proceeds; thirdly, what reason we have to obey this holy precept, and not give way to a murmuring humour.

First, for the first of these, everybody, I believe, by *murmuring* understands that dissatisfaction of mind which makes us repine at and find fault with our present condition.

But if we search into the propriety of the Greek word, we shall find that it signifies something more than merely an inward repining and dissatisfaction of the mind; denoting withal the outward expressions of that discontented humour in undutiful words. That is the import of γογγύζειν, which in our language we may translate, to 'grumble and mutter,' by speaking against such things or persons as we dislike without a just reason for it, or upon slight causes, especially when we ought rather to be very thankful.

And here in my text it hath a peculiar signification, for speaking disrespectfully of their governors and guides, out of a dislike of their conduct; which in the issue burst out into reproachful language against them: for this was the sin here taxed by the apostle in the old Israelites, who murmured against Moses and Aaron because they fancied they had brought them out of Egypt to perish in the wilderness. This they began to do so early after their deliverance, that they were no sooner come out of the Red Sea, and had sung their song of praise to God for it, but immediately, (as you read in the very same chapter,) when they had travelled but three days,) *the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink*[a]*?* And again, *The whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said, Would to God we had died by the hand of God in Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger*[b]. With these two first murmurings the patient goodness of God was pleased to bear, expecting they would be cured of this distemper by the care he took to provide both drink and meat for them in the wilderness: but when his gentleness would do no good upon them, and they were so far from laying to heart his tender mercies, and remembering what he had done for

[a] Exod. xv. 24. [b] Exod. xvi. 2, 3

them, that they fell into new and more desperate fits of this disease; then his displeasure arose against them, and moved him to begin to destroy them; with lighter strokes indeed, at the first breaking out of his anger; for *when the people complained*, in Numbers xi. 1, he only sent a fire which consumed those who were *in the skirts of the camp*. But when they would take no warning by this, he proceeds to heavier; for you read in Numbers xiv. 2, 3, their murmurings grew so high, that they had the face to say, not only *Would God we had died in Egypt*, or *in this wilderness;* but *Let us make us a captain, and let us return to Egypt*. A most unaccountable fit of discontent; which so infatuated them, as to make them think of their late slavery without any trouble; nay, speak of throwing themselves voluntarily into the hands of their cruel tormentors. Now this was so provoking, that God sent a plague to cut off those that were the cause of that murmuring, ver. 37, unto which the margins of your Bibles direct you as an explication of my text; the *destroyer* here spoken of being the angel whose ministry God used to destroy them with a pestilence, as it is explained in the case of David, 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. And they that escaped this plague were only reprieved for a time, but not acquitted; for they had this heavy sentence passed upon them all, that not one of the *evil congregation which murmured against God* should enter into the good land to which he intended to conduct them, but wander in the wilderness till they were utterly consumed, ver. 27, 35.

And yet this did not cure them of their wicked disposition; but you read of a far more grievous murmuring after this, which broke out into an open mutiny. Read Numbers xvi., where you will find a great party of the most eminent persons gathered together against Moses and Aaron, saying, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them;* that is, they pretended Moses and Aaron stretched their authority too far, and assumed a power which did not belong to them, or not more to them than any other; there being no man in the congregation but had as good a title to it as themselves: and therefore they boldly demanded, *Wherefore do ye lift up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?* As if they had said, By what right do you govern us, who are your equals?

This so incensed the Divine displeasure, that you read there of a more terrible destruction than the former: for lightning burnt up those who affronted Aaron; and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up those who disputed the authority of Moses. Which were such frightful examples, that they make us tremble now at the thoughts of them: and yet so hardened was that evil generation in this discontented humour, the very next morning *all the congregation of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord*, ver. 41; whereupon they had *all been consumed*, without any further reprieve, *as in a moment*, if Moses and Aaron, whom they so grossly abused, had not interceded with God, and made an atonement for them.

Now as they thus murmured because of the difficulties they met withal, when they first came out of Egypt, so there were such kind of men, it seems, in the beginning of our religion, who being made partakers of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, were so insensible of God's great grace to them. For when they saw the straits into which the profession of Christianity brought them, and other things were not suitable to their expectations, they murmured against the apostles themselves, and against other ministers of Jesus Christ, as if they had undone them; or, at least, they were very discontented and impatient under the troubles which befel them for religion's sake, and distrusted the conduct of the apostles; and were apt to betake themselves unto the guidance of other persons, *who promised them liberty, when they themselves were the servants of corruption*[c].

For notwithstanding such warnings as this of St. Paul in my text, we find by St. Jude there were some Christians, chiefly of the Jewish nation, who were *murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts*[d], that is, were of the same disposition with their forefathers in the wilderness[e]; complaining bitterly that they were in a distressed condition, (as the church was generally at that time,) and had not that rest, ease, liberty and prosperity which they longed for, and perhaps expected to enjoy. And it is very probable (which is Grotius's conjecture) that they complained of the present government, and were desirous to throw it off; for we read, ver. 8, *they despised*

[c] 2 Pet. ii. 19. [d] Ver. 10. [e] Numbers xi. 4, 5. &c.

dominion, and spake evil of dignities: going in the way of Cain and Core, ver. 12; though there was so little reason they should be discontented upon this account, that of all the former monarchies to which the Jews had been subject, whether Babylonian, Persian, or Grecian, none had treated them with such gentleness and lenity as the present did, which was that of the Romans.

But a murmuring humour is utterly insensible of any thing, but only present griefs or wants; having no remembrance of former evils either suffered or feared, nor being at all observant of present blessings, though never so many, and though never so big with future hopes and expectations. This is visible in the whole history of that people, with whom the Divine goodness was *grieved forty years long in the wilderness.*

From which we may also learn, that though this be the propriety of the word *murmuring* in this place, yet it hath also a larger signification, (as we understand from several other passages of the holy Scriptures,) and doth not denote only discontent with the present government, but with a man's own private condition, when it is not suitable to his desires.

For the history of the old Israelites informs us, that their murmurings were as much at the state of their private affairs, as at the public management. This was their common fault in the wilderness, that they complained upon every occasion if they had not such plentiful provision; nay, such variety of it, as might gratify their fancy as well as satisfy their necessity: or, if they fell into any difficulty in their travels unto that good land, to which God promised, if they would have patience, in due time to conduct them.

And as we find them complaining upon this account, so we find (if we look into the rest of the Scriptures) other persons complaining upon divers other scores.

1. Some because they were not regarded according to the deserts they fancied in themselves. As we read in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard[f], that some murmured at the good man of the family, because they who came early into his service, and *had borne the burden and heat of the day,* received no more wages than those who came later, and had taken less pains in his business; which they thought to be unequal.

[f] Matt. xx. 11.

2. Others we find murmuring because they seemed to be neglected, while great care was taken of their neighbours; so we read in Acts vi. 1, that *there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily administration.*

3. Others murmured at such doctrines as they did not relish, finding fault with them, as the manner is, before they understood them. *Many of his disciples, when they heard that, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? And when Jesus knew that they murmured at it, he said, Doth this offend you*[g]*?* that is, turn you away from me? As much as to say, There is no cause for it; the fault is in yourselves, and not in me or my doctrine.

4. Another sort murmur because all do not consent to their little opinions, and comply with their customs; as the Pharisees did at the disciples of Christ, because they *transgressed the tradition of the elders,* and did not wash their hands before they sat down to eat[h]; and because they plucked the ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands on the Sabbath-day[i].

All which I pass over with the bare mention of them, because that is sufficient for my purpose; which is to show, that any thing we dislike because it is not according to our fancy, opinion, humour, inclination, or interest, may be the matter of murmuring and complaint: whereby we reflect very reproachfully upon God and his providence, and sometimes upon those who are God's ministers, or upon our innocent brethren, who may have good warrant for that which we condemn.

And now from what hath been said it will be easy to show from whence this murmuring humour proceeds; which is the second thing I propounded, and may soon be despatched.

II. Secondly. 1. For it is evident it proceeds from false opinions and wrong notions of things, which must be examined and corrected, or else there will be no cure for it. Hence it was that the Scribes and Pharisees murmured, because our Saviour and his disciples did freely *eat with publicans and sinners*[k]; not considering that the *whole needed not a physician, but the sick:* and that he came *not to call the righteous, but the sin-*

[g] John vi. 60, 61. [h] Matt. xxv. 2. [i] Luke vi. 1. [k] Luke v. 30.

ners to repentance. The other Jews had done the same upon other occasions before mentioned, but very unreasonably and unjustly, as they might have understood, if instead of murmuring they would have pondered his instructions. *They murmured at him,* (saith St. John, vi. 41,) *because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.* But why did they not rather complain (as Musculus glosses upon those words) that they could not understand things of such weight and necessity? Why did they not pray to be enlightened from above, and desire him to instruct them more clearly in these matters? This had become men of sense. But in this we see the genius not only of Judaical, but of all carnal minds, who sooner murmur against the truth they do not understand, than accuse the grossness of their own hearts, and pray to God for the gift of right understanding and of faith. If they had understood in what sense he said he came down from heaven, they would not have murmured; and therefore they ought to have desired to be instructed in the sense of his words, and not have murmured at that which they did not understand. But thus it fares, as I said, with the doctrine of Christ, that "it sooner finds those that dislike it, and condemn it, before they know it, than hearts that desire rightly to understand it, and to embrace it when it is understood." Thus he.

2. It arises also from impatience of any troubles or inconveniences which commonly attend our condition here in this world, or which arise from our present circumstances; as we see in the history of the Hebrew nation before mentioned, whose case this was upon several occasions.

3. From pride and ambition, envy and malignity of spirit, as in the case of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram; who imagined themselves to be altogether as deserving as Moses and Aaron, and to have as much right as they to that authority, which they pretended those great ministers of God had usurped over the people.

4. Sometimes from luxury and wantonness, as when the Israelites murmured because they had not such dainty food as they looked for, though they were otherwise plentifully and miraculously fed with manna from heaven, which they were cloyed withal, and loathed[1].

[1] Numb. xi.

5. Sometimes, or rather always, from unthankfulness for the great mercies we enjoy; which are in all conditions so many, that they might well silence all unmannerly complaints, did we but take the pains to lay those blessings to heart: especially if we compared them with the bad condition wherein we have sometimes been, or deserve to be, if we be not more grateful than to complain in a better. This was also the case of the whole Hebrew nation in the wilderness, who forgat the works of God, and remembered not the wonders he had done for them, nor the evils from which he had delivered them; and so fell into fits of discontent upon every occasion. And it is the case of all other men who are guilty of this sin at this day; for as Œcumenius[m] notes upon those words of the apostle, (*Do all things without murmurings and disputing*[n],) 'He that murmurs is unthankful unto God, and he that is unthankful speaks hardly of him.'

6. Sometimes from vile covetousness, though covered under specious pretences; as when Judas the traitor murmured at the waste of the precious ointment poured on our Saviour, which he would have had sold that the money might have come into his pocket.

Lastly, from want of a lively faith in God and in his good providence, which was the sin of the old Israelites also, *who murmured, saying, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he clave the rock that the waters gushed out. Can he give bread also? Can he provide flesh for his people*[o]? The former instances of his power did not breed such a confidence in him as they should have wrought in their hearts, but they still distrusted him, whom they could not but acknowledge had done things as wonderful for them as those which they further desired.

And thus Origen observes upon Exod. xvi.[p], it is common among men to murmur if the weather be not seasonable, if the years be not so fruitful as they were wont to be; nay, if every thing do not fall out according to their wishes and expectations: that is, we would have no trials of our faith and

[m] Ὁ γὰρ γογγύζων, ἀχαριστεῖ. Ὁ δὲ ἀχαριστῶν δυσφημεῖ. [tom. ii. p. 85 C.]

[n] Phil. ii. 14.

[o] Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20.

[p] [Hom. vii. tom. ii. p. 153.]

patience and submission to God, but a constant stream of prosperous successes, just according to our own contrivances or heart's desires.

Which is a very dangerous distemper of mind, which must be cured by removing these causes from whence it proceeds. There is not the like danger, it must be acknowledged, in every one of them; but none of them are safe, and therefore we ought to seek after a speedy remedy. It makes a considerable difference in this case, who it is that murmurs, against whom, and for what cause. If he be a subject who hath received great benefits; if it be against him to whom he owes much, and therefore ought to love and praise; if it be for a trifling or a tolerable cause, much more if thanks ought rather to be rendered than complaints made; it is a most detestable sort of murmuring, as the good man before named (Musculus) hath observed. It is also much to be considered from whence this vice arises, whether from mere impatience of some loss or inconvenience, or from pride, contempt, indignation, and envy: for though it be vicious in itself to murmur against a superior, yet it is a less fault if it arise from some damage a man hath received, of which he is impatient, than it would be if it proceed from pride, contempt, and a spirit of envy, such as was in Corah, Dathan, and Abiram against Moses and Aaron, and in the false apostles and their sectaries among the Corinthians who murmured and spake against St. Paul. The first Christians had some among them, as you have heard, who murmured because their widows were neglected in the provision which was daily made for the poor; but it was neither out of pride, nor contempt, nor envy, but from mere impatience of the grievance it was to them, to see those for whom they had a special concern not so much minded as others, who had no more need than they that were neglected. Every eye can discern the difference between these murmurings; which are not all of equal guilt, yet none of them free from blame, nor without danger, if we do not apply ourselves with all diligence to the proper means of curing our minds of this distemper.

Unto which that I may awaken you, I shall now proceed to consider the reason we have to obey this apostolical precept, and no longer give way to a discontented humour, which is the

third thing I undertook in the beginning, and may help to remove the causes of this disease, if we well weigh the mischiefs it doth.

Thirdly, 1. And here let it be considered that this is a most uncomfortable condition, and puts the soul into such disorders, that, if it did no other hurt, it ought on this account to be avoided; for who is there that allows himself in this humour of discontented murmuring, either at the public state of things, or his own private condition, that truly enjoys any part of those blessings which are fallen to his share in this world? His spirit is so sorrowed by it that he can relish nothing, though in itself never so pleasant: he is poor and miserable in the midst of abundance, wanting not only that which he hath not, but even that which he hath: he takes no satisfaction in any thing, though God's bounty hath bestowed perhaps variety of blessings upon him; for this humour will let him take no notice of them, but only of that which is grievous to him. By this means he possesses nothing, no, not himself; his soul being carried away in a hurry by things without him, he knows not whither; he is seldom at home, and when he is, he finds nothing there but disorders, tumults, and disquiets of mind; such a confusion of thoughts as hurries him away again from himself, and that, many times, into dangerous adventures. Who would indulge then such a temper of mind as spoils all our comforts, even that satisfaction which we should find in our own serious thoughts?

2. But it is not merely an uncomfortable condition, it is also very sinful; for it proceeds, as you have heard, from several other sins, and it is the cause also of many more, both of sins of omission and sins of commission, as we commonly distinguish them.

1. First, of innumerable sins of omission, in not recounting the multitude of God's mercies bestowed upon us; in not pondering the greatness of them, and our own unworthiness to enjoy them; in not giving perpetual thanks for them, neither calling to mind all the evils from which we have been preserved or delivered, nor so much as taking notice of all the blessings we daily receive, which call for our most grateful acknowledgments. For they who are given to murmuring seldom reflect (as we find by the Israelites) upon the obligations they have to

God, though never so great, never so wonderful; they forget how he hath saved them from the dreadful dangers which they feared, or delivered them from the heavy burdens which oppressed them, and mind only what they at present desire or dislike.

Which wrought the Israelites into such a very bad temper of mind that they were never pleased. No better pleased out of Egypt than when they were in it; for they murmured as much, or more, after their deliverance, as they did before; and I do not find they were better satisfied in Canaan, than they had been either in Egypt or in the wilderness; for they carried their ungrateful mind along with them thither: and men can be pleased nowhere, in no condition, unless they have a due sense of God and of his goodness, and be truly affected with his benefits.

2. As for the sins of commission, they are no less numerous; such as envious detractions, evil surmisings, rash censurings, lying, defamations, and sometimes injustice, oppression, extortion, if not downright robberies, which are the common effects of men's discontented repining at their own private condition. And when they are discontented with the public state of affairs, thence proceed evil speakings, clamour, revilings, variance, strife, contention, quarrelling; and many times higher degrees of all these sins, such as *speaking evil of dignities*, &c. For by discontent men exasperate their own spirits, and by complaints and murmurings they exasperate others unto unruly passions, which increase into undutiful practices, which break out at last into public disturbances. And how many mischiefs men are wont to draw upon themselves by that means I shall not now say, because my present business is to show only the sinfulness of a murmuring spirit.

But the next particular will make you sensible of that also, when I have added to this these two considerations.

1. First, that a murmuring humour puts us into a temper of mind directly contrary to the Christian spirit, which consists in such a happy frame of mind as makes us rejoice in God always, and administer all the joy and comfort we are able one to another. *For the kingdom of God* (saith St. Paul) *is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*[q]. Where by *joy*

[q] Rom. xiv. 17.

is not meant only the joy we feel in our own hearts from a sense of God's love to us, but that which we give to one another by our friendly agreement. So St. Chrysostom, and from him Œcumenius interprets the words: "A virtuous life, peace with our brethren, and the joy which springs from concord," are the things will bring us to heaven; and "he that subverts this peace and joy doth his brother a greater injury than if he had robbed him of his money:" for it is a thing far more precious than gold and silver, being one of the *fruits of the Spirit*[r], next to love, from whence it springs as from its source: for if we love our brethren we shall be loath to grieve them, and shall study to please them; which is such an excellent disposition of mind, that Plato himself reports this as an ancient saying, that "he should be reputed the wisest man and the most victorious whose business it is to make others rejoice and be merry[s].

Now murmuring is so opposite to this, that it damps all the joy we should otherwise take in God and in his love, and puts us into such a sullen humour, that it spoils also Christian society, and that sweet fellowship we ought to have, by giving such counsel and comfort one to another as may make us rejoice always, whatsoever happens, and never repine at any thing though never so cross to our expectations; which we should the rather study, because joy makes us more serviceable to the world than otherwise we shall be, both by putting us forward to do good, and by commending piety and goodness unto others. Whence it is that we read, *The churches were multiplied when they walked in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*[t].

Let us take heed then how we any way (particularly by murmuring and complaints,) banish this heavenly guest from ourselves or others, which is "the page," as St. Basil[u] calls it, (or whosoever was the author of the Monastical Constitutions,) "that waits upon goodness and virtue." Especially now, when there is such cause for it, by God's wonderful goodness to us in this kingdom, let us not upon any account refuse to take our share in it, but (to speak in the psalmist's) phrase, *Let us rejoice in the gladness of our nation*[x].

[r] Gal. v. 22.
[s] L. 2. de Legibus. [p. 657 E.]
[t] Acts ix. 31.
[u] Ὀπαδὸς ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀγαθότητος εὐφροσύνη. [Const. Monast. cap. 2. tom. ii. p. 541 D.]
[x] Psalm cvi. 5.

2. For if we do not, but give way to a murmuring humour, it will spoil all the good we do, and make it unacceptable to God our Saviour. Which is a reason, more especially, why we should not murmur at any part of our Christian duty; no, not at taking up the cross, nor any thing else which may seem a *hard saying;* which is the worst sort of murmuring that we can be guilty of; for it is the quality of base, disingenuous and stupid slaves, (as St. Chrysostom[y] observes upon Phil. ii. 14,) and therefore ought not to be found in a child, "who is about his father's business, and labours for himself. Consider," says his father, "that what thou dost for me thou dost for thyself: thou wilt have the benefit of it; wherefore then dost thou grumble? It is for them to murmur, who labour and toil when others reap the advantage: but he that labours for himself, what cause hath he to murmur? He had better not work at all, than not without murmuring. He loses his labour; he spoils that which he hath done, though it be well done. Do you not see how in our own family we are wont to say continually, I had rather you would let it alone than do it with murmuring? Nay, we oftentimes choose rather to want one's service than bear with his murmuring humour: for it is a grievous sin, very grievous, to murmur. It is nigh unto blasphemy; which is the reason God punished it so severely in the Israelites; for it was a piece of ingratitude. He that murmurs is unthankful to God, and he that is unthankful is a blasphemer." Thus he.

And indeed it is directly contrary to that love and charity which is the note of the children of God, and *believes all things, hopes all things*, takes all in good part, and makes the best construction of them: as, on the contrary, where self-love, pride, and such like vices reign, there is nothing but impatience, suspicions, sinister interpretations, murmurings and complaints, whereby even things good in themselves are corrupted and defiled. This we learn from that famous instance of Christian charity, viz. *entertaining strangers*, in which it was not so much considered whom they entertained, as with what mind. If they did it with an ill will, and repiningly, it was so far from being looked upon as a benefit, that it was taken for a reproach: whence that admonition of St. Peter, *Use hospitality one to another without grudging*[z], or *murmuring;* (for it is the same

[y] [Tom. xi. p. 259.]

[z] 1 Pet. iv. 9.

word which we so translate in other places.) They were not to think much at it, as we speak; much less to grumble at the trouble or the charge their brethren brought upon them; but receive them as cheerfully as men now welcome their guests to the public inns, where they pay for what they have: and thus, as St. Paul instructs us in the place before named, we ought to perform our whole Christian duty, (*do all things without murmuring,*) and likewise entertain, in the same manner, whatsoever falls out in the world by the direction or permission of God's wise providence; for he is not pleased to see us follow him, or do as he bids us, with a heavy heart, and a discontented, complaining spirit.

And so I come to the third and last reason why we should obey the apostolical admonition in my text, and work out this part of our salvation, even *with fear and trembling;* which is this,

III.

That murmuring is the cause of such sins as are the punishment of those who are guilty of it. *Their own tongue*, as the psalmist speaks, *falls upon themselves;* they uttering in their anger such discontented speeches, that God takes them at their word, as we speak, and brings upon them the evils they unadvisedly wished: for anger, you may observe, is the ordinary companion of discontented murmuring; which reflects so highly upon God that it moves his just displeasure. We may say in this case, as Solomon doth, *The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth* (or as the Chaldee hath it, *murmureth*) *against the Lord*[a]. Men run inconsiderately into many sins, and then lay the blame upon their natural weakness and want of power to avoid them; which is in effect to lay the fault upon God: and in the same manner they draw many inconveniences upon themselves, and fall into great straits; whereupon they fret and fume (though not directly, yet by consequence) against God. For when they say, Things might have been better ordered; what necessity was there for this? they forget that nothing comes to pass without God's providence, (no, not those things which are ill done,) towards which we ought to behave ourselves with a becoming reverence, and take heed lest we speak *unadvisedly with our lips.*

[a] Prov. xix. 13.

The danger of which is so apparent in the example of the murmuring Israelites of which my text speaks, that we need seek no other proof of it: for you read how, in a raging fit of discontent, they were so distracted, that they minded neither what they did nor what they said; for they entered into a consultation, as you have heard, to make them a captain, and return again into the Egyptian slavery, out of which they had been lately redeemed: as if that were more desirable than the present liberty they enjoyed of serving God as he had appointed in the wilderness; which they were not permitted to do while they stayed in Egypt. And among other angry things which they said in that discontented fit, this foolish word dropped out of their mouth, *Would God we had died in this wilderness*[b]. Accordingly it came to pass; they had their wish: God being so provoked with their murmuring, that he pronounced this heavy judgment upon them for it, that none of them should see the good land he designed for them, but perish in the wilderness; where they wandered about for forty years, till all their carcasses were consumed.

This is a sufficient caution against this sin; which is then most dangerously provoking when it continues long: which is the only thing I shall further observe upon this argument.

The Israelites, I told you in the beginning, had been guilty of murmuring before the time unto which the apostle hath respect in my text: but God most graciously forbare to proceed against them, and did not send the destroyer to cut them off. Before they came out of Egypt, you may read in Exod. v. 21, how reproachfully they treated Moses and Aaron; as they did after their deliverance, Exod. xiv. 13, xv. 24, and xvi. 2: in the last of which places you may observe a great many aggravations of their sin. Read the words again, to make them the more evident: *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

1. Behold here how very gross their ingratitude was, which

[b] Numb. xiv. 2.

extenuated the benefits they had received as inconsiderable; and, looking only upon a present strait, which was soon over, made them quite forget their long servitude in the house of bondage, out of which they had been newly delivered.

2. Nay, behold how they magnify Egypt, where they were no better than vile slaves; and prefer carnal things before divine blessing, the flesh pots of Egypt before the liberty of their religion, and the glorious presence of God, which appeared among them, and went along with them.

3. More than this, they speak of the very plagues of Egypt (by which they wish they had died) with more satisfaction than of the mercies they enjoyed under the Almighty's protection.

4. And it is observable how extravagantly they commend their condition in Egypt, as if they had wanted nothing there, but had had their fill of all good things; and despise their present happiness of being the *people of the Lord*, whom he had *redeemed and purchased*[c].

5. They unjustly also and ungratefully accuse Moses and Aaron for bringing them forth out of Egypt into that wilderness; when they did nothing of their own head, but by the direction of God, who went before them, and led them the way wherein they should go.

6. To conclude this, they miscall their glorious deliverance from the house of bondage into a state of freedom by the odious name of death and destruction.

So frantic doth a discontented humour make those who are possessed with it: notwithstanding which, God, as I said, was so longsuffering towards them, that he did not at that time visit their iniquity upon them, but bare with them till he saw them so settled and fixed in this evil temper of mind, that they would not be reformed by his patient goodness. Then he took a severe vengeance on them, and by degrees utterly destroyed them.

Let us admire this longsuffering and forbearance of God, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness, which, as Isaiah speaks, *multiplies to pardon*, and hath not yet entered into judgment with us: but let us take heed how we provoke him to anger, by continuing in this or any other sin; especially after much patience with us, which ought to lead us to a speedy repentance.

[c] Exod. xv. 13, 16.

God may be pleased graciously to pass by the first irruptions of those passions which make us murmur; nay, not be so strict in marking what is done amiss, as not to pardon many fits of discontent which may come upon us. He knows our frame and pities our weakness; and is slow to anger, and far from being forward to punish our frowardness. But if we indulge ourselves in this humour, and do not labour to correct it; if we set not ourselves against it, but let it grow to such an height that we forget to be thankful to God for his mercies, never reflect upon all the good he hath done us, nor the evils from which he hath freed us, either by his own hand immediately, or by the ministry of others; but, quite contrary, we complain in a state of happiness, being displeased that every thing is not to our gust; and disordering ourselves with angry discontent because all things are not ordered according to our mind; and perhaps speaking against those whom God hath employed to do us good, (which was the case of the old Israelites in their murmurings against Moses and Aaron:) then it is high time, we may fear, for God to chastise us, both for our ingratitude, and for our abuse of his longsuffering goodness to us.

We have all the reason in the world to believe, that if we walk in the same way the Israelites did, it will lead us into the same destruction, as the apostle here teaches us in this discourse to the Corinthians. If we slight, or do not value the mercies God hath bestowed upon us; or undutifully reflect upon those who have been instrumental in procuring them to us; if we so dislike our present settlement that we thirst after a change; we do not know what punishments we are drawing upon ourselves. And let us be assured, we shall be no more satisfied in that change, should it come to pass, (which God forbid,) than we are in the present establishment. The motions of our discontented minds cannot be quieted by any thing without them. We shall ever find matter for complaint, and far greater in a new revolution than we can do in this.

We have not forgotten, sure, the condition wherein we lately were; how all our laws were violated; what endeavours were used to subvert our religion and our government; so that *men's hearts* (to speak in our Saviour's words [d]), *failed them for fear*,

[d] Luke xxi. 26.

and for looking after those things which were coming upon us; which we shall unavoidably draw upon ourselves, (and, if it be possible, greater evils,) should we be so unhappy as to see our present settlement overturned.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, not only to your actions and to your tongues, but to your very minds and spirits. Do not allow of any risings and boilings there, but instantly suppress them. Give not way to the very beginnings of any discontented thoughts and angry motions: stay them before they proceed further and grow unruly. Ask them what they would have? whither they would go? what they design, and where they will end? For you know not whither they will carry you, if you do not put an end to them as soon as they begin.

They will lead you from one sin to another, till they have drawn one mischief upon you after another; and where they will conclude at last we cannot certainly tell; but we may make a shrewd guess, by the example of those whom the apostle here sets before us to be a warning to us; by which if we judge, it will be in utter destruction. For all that evil generation who would not cease their murmuring, notwithstanding all the chidings they had for it, and the sharp punishments that had been inflicted on them for their amendment, fell at last in the wilderness, short of the promised land, into which God resolved they should not enter because of their perverseness.

And what was the cause of all this? What made them so perversely murmur, but only such things as these?

They forgat the late oppressions under which they had groaned, and the glorious deliverance God had wrought for them from that miserable bondage.

They considered not their present ease, and the liberty they had to serve God according to their heart's desires.

They had no respect to the hope which was set before them, of being brought to perfect rest in the land of promise, and there settled in the happiness which God himself expresses in these magnificent words: *If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine.*

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation[e].

Herein then lies the cure of this disease, if we find any spice of it in ourselves.

1. Let us reflect daily upon the condition wherein we were a few months ago, and the extraordinary hand of God in delivering us from our fears.

2. And then lay to heart the freedom we now enjoy to serve God without fear of those dangers wherewith we were surrounded.

3. Together with the hope we have (if we ourselves do not hinder) to see both our civil and religious rights and liberties secured to us and to our posterity, so as they have not been since we were a nation.

And then we shall be so far from murmuring, that we shall think we owe the highest praises and thanksgivings to him.

Which if we be careful to pay, and every day upon our bended knees bless his holy name, *who hath saved our life from destruction, and crowned us with loving-kindness and tender mercies;* we shall never be guilty of murmuring any more, which is utterly inconsistent with thankfulness to God for all his benefits.

Of which if we be unmindful, who knows but we may fall by degrees into such an angry mood as that of the Israelites; who commended their Egyptian bondage, and miscalled their slavery there by the name of liberty to enjoy a fulness of good things; nay, looked upon their deliverance from thence as a betraying them to perish in the wilderness; insomuch that at last they wished themselves in Egypt again, and conferrred about going back into their chains. This was such a fearful provocation, that we should dread any approaches to it; not admitting so much as a discontented thought, if we can prevent it; but if it press in upon us, reject it, or throw it out as soon as it is entered: for if it lie brooding there, we know not what it may bring forth. If it be no more than complaints, where we have reason rather to give thanks, it is a great deal too much, and must be speedily amended: for there is no great difference between approving that which is evil and disliking

[e] Exod. xix. 5, 6.

that which is good: Nay, "to find fault with that which is well done, is equally culpable as to commend that which is bad: the same thing to free that which is base and unworthy from just reprehension; and to quarrel with those things which are so far from deserving our censure, that they ought to be highly praised[f]."

[f] Cyril. Alex. Ἐν ἴσῃ γὰρ τάξει τῷ συνειπεῖν τῇ φαυλότητι τὸ κατηγορεῖν τοῦ καλοῦ, &c. in Johan. vii. 12. [tom. iv. p. 407 D.]

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE KING AND QUEEN

AT WHITEHALL

APRIL 16, 1690.

BEING THE FAST-DAY.

Published by their Majesties' special command.

A SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE THE KING AND QUEEN,

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BEING THE FAST-DAY[a].

PROVERBS xiv. 34.

Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.

IF we enlarge our thoughts beyond our own narrow particular beings, and look upon ourselves as members of a community, we cannot but think it our interest to endeavour its safety no less than the preservation of our natural body: whose health ought not to be dearer to us than the prosperous and flourishing estate of the country where we live.

Which if we heartily wish, (as we seem to do by our assembling here together to implore the blessing of Heaven upon their majesties, and the forces they employ for our preservation,) it concerns us to apply ourselves unto the serious use of all those means which we see to be necessary for the making our prayers successful.

Now there is no book in the holy Scriptures which gives us fuller directions in the way to make not only private persons and families, but whole kingdoms and states happy, than this of Solomon: who comprises them all in this general maxim here in my text, *Righteousness exalteth a nation*, &c.

I will not vex our translation, nor examine the exactness of it in the latter part of the verse, which may be otherwise ren-

[a] [On the outbreak of the Irish rebellion, a public and general fast was appointed to be kept on Wednesday, March 12, and the third Wednesday in every month successively during the continuance of the war. The present sermon was preached on one of these occasions.]

dered: but consider the words as an ancient proverb, grounded on great reason, constant observation, and long experience; which assured king Solomon of these two things. First, of the certain way and means to make a nation great, honourable, and famous. Secondly, on the contrary, of the no less certain way and means to lay it low, and make it base and vile in the eyes of all the world.

These are the two parts of my text, the first of which is expressed in the beginning of the words, *Righteousness exalteth a nation:* that is the way to make it great and glorious. The second, in the latter part of the verse, *Sin is a reproach to any people:* that is the way to lay them low, were they never so high in riches, reputation, and all other things before.

The first of these being evidently proved will necessarily infer the second: and therefore, after a brief explication of what is meant here by *righteousness*, I shall endeavour, in the rest of my discourse, to make good the truth of what Solomon asserts concerning it, by showing how a nation is raised and advanced by righteousness.

It is certain that righteousness hath a threefold signification in Scripture; yea, in this very book of the Proverbs.

1. Where, first, it signifies that particular virtue which we call *justice* and honest dealing: which consists in giving to every one that which properly belongs to him. Thus the Wise Man uses the word in Prov. xvi. 8: *Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right:* i. e. a small estate honestly gotten is to be preferred before a great one gotten by fraud and doing wrong to others.

2. Sometimes the signification is enlarged to include in it another virtue also, viz. mercy and charity. In which sense the Wise Man seems to use it, (to omit other places,) *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*, (i. e. in a calamitous time,) *but righteousness* (i. e. doing good with our riches) *delivereth from death;* may preserve us in the greatest dangers.

3. But there is another acceptation of this word, which is more comprehensive; wherein it signifies not only these, but all other virtues whatsoever, universal obedience to the laws of God. And thus it is commonly taken in this book, particularly here in my text, as appears from that which is opposed

[a] Prov. xi. 4.

to it in the latter part of the words, viz. *sin*. Which most certainly signifies all sorts of wickedness, and therefore by *righteousness* we ought to understand all manner of virtue: piety and holiness, as well as justice and mercy. In one word, true religion: which I may safely use instead of the word *righteousness*, as comprehending under it whatsoever is good and virtuous, which springs from true religion and the fear of God.

Now these things being premised, I shall address myself to the proof of this proposition, "that true religion and piety (which is the mother of justice, mercy, moderation, and all other virtues) exalteth a nation:" that is, makes it truly great and honourable; of great power, and in great esteem in the world.

Which it doth (1) in itself; and (2) by virtue of its own natural fruits and consequences; and (3) by procuring the blessing of Divine Providence upon that country where it flourishes.

I.

First, I say, righteousness, that is, true religion, in itself, promotes and advances the glory of a nation: being in its own nature a truly great, noble, and honourable thing: which every man praises and commends in others, though perhaps he doth not love to practise it himself. For who is there, for instance, that doth not rather love and honour a people that are just, holy, and devout, than a nation that is merely rich, powerful, and mighty? It is possible a nation may be so for a time, though it do not stand upon the foundations of truth, justice, and piety; but it is impossible it should last so long: and while it doth continue so, what is its power without piety but an ability to do mischief and to destroy; which is hateful to all the world?

The greatest monarchs have sometimes been the greatest spoilers: who, though they were feared, yet were never truly honoured. Though they acquired some fame, they never had any reputation or esteem. Though they were cried up, because dreaded, while alive; yet they were always scorned, because hated, when they were dead.

Whereas, on the contrary, religious princes, such as are holy towards God, and merciful towards men, sober in their counsels and conduct, firm to their compacts and promises, faithful

to their alliances, have always gained the love and honour of all those that read their story.

II.

But as righteousness and true religion is in itself noble and honourable, highly esteemed by all men; and thereby a means to make a nation glorious; so it doth much more promote the glory and interest of it by its natural consequences: on which I shall longer insist.

I. And that, first of all, because true religion and virtue promotes industry; which is the very nerves and sinews of every commonwealth. It puts every man into some calling and employment, (not suffering princes to live idly,) and makes every calling active and industrious; and industry gains wealth and riches; and riches gained by honest industry procure power, interest, and reputation in the world. For *in all labour* (saith this wise man, ver. 23 of this chapter) *there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.* Industry and labour are always beneficial, and bring many advantages along with them: but where time is spent in vain company and frivolous discourses, in hearing what every one will tell, and telling again what hath been heard; there follows poverty upon such misspence of time; and shame and misery follow that. According to that which we read in chap. xii. 11: *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.* As if he said, He that minds the business unto which God and the nature of his station calls him shall want nothing convenient for him: but he who abandons himself to the company of those who lead vain, idle, and useless lives shall live in shame, and die in beggary; and so betray himself to be a man void of all understanding.

Idle and extravagant persons are the very pests of the commonwealth; who lie as a heavy burden upon the shoulders of others, because they live wholly to waste and spend, devour and consume. They eat the fruit of other men's labours, and drink the sweat of their neighbours' brows. Every thing is but a prey to them, who are little better than those that rob and spoil; for they live by the consumption of other people. Which, by the way, should excite all that have any authority to correct this vice, according to the wholesome laws provided

against it; which would be a part of that reformation on which it is the very business of this day to resolve, as the means to make us a happy nation.

For, on the other hand, the laborious and industrious man maintains that station wherein God hath placed him, though never so mean, against the invasion of want and poverty; and against those dreadful effects of poverty which frequently throw a nation into terrible convulsions, by producing in it sedition and confusion.

Is not a nation then beholden to religion, more than to any thing else, even upon this account; that by putting men upon industry and labour, and making it a piece of conscience not to waste one's time vainly, it prevents those insufferable mischiefs which grow out of idleness, sloth and luxury?

Which might be further demonstrated from a known effect of true religion and the fear of God, which is sobriety, moderation, and frugality; which are both the parent and the product of industry. Which industry, I might also show, is not only the mother of riches, but of wisdom also, learning, knowledge, and understanding of all manner of things, whether natural, moral, political or divine. Which are not gotten by idleness, but constantly procured, in some measure, by labour and pains. That is, some men by their industry get wisdom and knowledge; others, whose genius lies not that way, get riches and wealth; and there are those who get both, and are all highly serviceable unto the nation, to advance the greatness, the power, the credit, and the glory of it.

But having many things to say, I omit all further discourse of these considerations, and desire you,

II. Secondly, to consider, that as righteousness, that is, true religion, promotes private industry, and by that means tends to the advancement of a nation, so it also disposes men (which is a far greater thing) to mind the public good and honour of the nation where they live.

There is no good man, who hath a true sense of religion and virtue, who doth not consider that he was not born merely for himself; but to help forward the good of others also, even of the whole country whereof he is a member. For next to the duty we owe unto God, who made us all, and unto our parents, who brought us into the world, all virtuous men have always

placed the duty we owe our country. And the more any man minds the first of these, his duty towards God, the more religiously will he mind the last, the safety and honour of his country. Which ought to be so dear unto us, that no private friendships, no, nor the duty our natural parents challenge from us, ought in some cases to come in competition with it. Thus men of worth in the several ages and nations of the world have ever thought.

Which makes our shame here in England the greater, who of late years have had so little regard to this, which of all other things ought to have been most affectionately tendered. And what was the reason of it, but an inundation of all manner of vice and wickedness upon us? This was the general cause of it: and more particularly, sensuality, avarice, ambition, atheism and infidelity, (which are the fountain of all vice,) are very base and poor-spirited things.

For a vicious man is at the best but a crafty and subtle beast; and the beasts mind nothing but themselves, or that which they look upon as a part of themselves, their young ones, and that only while they are young.

Who ever knew an atheist truly useful or serviceable to his country? Who can name one that ever looked much beyond himself and his own private interests and pleasures? And, indeed, how should he do any thing noble and generous for his country (when it will expose him to any danger or trouble) who cannot hope for a reward from God for what he doth?

How should an idle companion and a sensual person, a man abandoned to his ease, his lust, and bodily pleasure, a man that loves nobody but himself, be concerned for the good of his country? No, let the laws and liberties of it sink or swim, it is alike to him. For let his relations, friends, and family beg or starve, nay, let his heir be in danger to ask a morsel of bread at his neighbour's door, (for some of these men are not so good as the beasts, who have a care of their young ones,) he will have his pleasure when his lusts have besotted him. They must be fed, and his vanity must be gratified, as long as he is able to make provision for them. Let shame and infamy, the hatred and ill-will of the whole nation fall upon him, he regards it not; for his whole care is for his own carcase, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Which is the nature also of covetous and ambitious men; who, to raise themselves, will not stick to ruin their country. This is most manifestly a very great plague to the commonwealth; where there are many of this sort of men in it.

But now, on the contrary, that holy religion which teaches us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and not revengefully or maliciously to hurt our enemies, teaches us much more to love our country; for the sake of which the better sort of heathens did not grudge to deny, nay, to hazard themselves to preserve it in safety. And therefore he who is a good Christian, that is, lives according to the laws of our religion, is of a free, generous, and public spirit; willing to lay out himself, nay, to suffer for the common good.

If there be an occasion to serve himself by disserving the public, he will keep his hands clear and pure from such foolish baseness, and serve his country faithfully and justly; knowing that therein he most effectually serves himself, and shall gain by it both in this world and in the next.

Thus is that again verified which the man here affirms, as he had done before, *By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted*[b]. Upright piety highly tends to the advancement of a people's happiness; both as it puts men upon labour and industry, and as it makes them labour for the public good.

III. Unto which add, in the third place, that religion and virtue makes a nation strong and powerful: and that not only by the means before mentioned, but by procuring likewise unity, concord, and agreement among fellow-citizens and countrymen; who are preserved by being knit together in love, but undone by discord and dissension.

Now true religion combines men together, and so makes them mighty and formidable: first, by removing the causes of division; and secondly, by making them feel the happy effects of peace and quietness.

The causes of division are pride, conceitedness, self-will, covetousness, ambition, self-love, hatred, revenge, and such like lusts; from whence, as St. James observes, come quarrellings and fightings: that is, from want of true religion, which would cure men of all these evil qualities, and make them feel them-

[b] Proverbs xi. 11.

selves happy in mutual love and humble charity, as well as by the practice of justice and truth.

For no man is either oppressed himself, or hath any inclination to oppress others, when he doth as he would be done by; not only by abstaining from doing injury to others, because he would not be injured by them, but by relieving, assisting, and doing good to others, because he would be so dealt withal were he in need of their succour. That is, when true charity and brotherly kindness is added unto justice and truth, (as it is where true religion prevails,) in what an happy condition is that nation! where every one finds his neighbours easy and kind to him, and he himself is easy to himself. For when is a man more at ease than when he hath no difference with anybody; no quarrels, no contention, no heart-burnings nor evil surmises; but his soul is full of love and good-will towards others, being knit to them in sincere affection, not only as his neighbours, but as his brethren and friends?

This is the effect of true religion, and the effect of this is great peace, and consequently prosperity at home. Where, as nothing more dishonours a nation, and endangers it, than domestic broils or opposite factions, which are always bandying one against the other, to the great damage as well as disgrace of all; so these are all prevented, or presently quieted by religion and virtue, to the great honour and glory both of religion and of the nation which is so happy as to be under the blessed influences thereof.

The best men indeed are liable to great infirmities, which may sometimes make them troublesome unto themselves and unto others; through misinformation, through mistake, through surprise, through passion, and the like. But these, not being wilful evils, cannot prove very hurtful, nor be of long continuance. And besides, where true religion possesses the heart, it makes men, on one hand, so charitable as to bear and to pardon such infirmities; and, on the other hand, so humble as to make the best amends they can for any harm they have done by their mistake or passion, and to be more careful and kind for the time to come. For that commonly is the effect of little quarrels among good men; who are so much the faster friends when they see their errors, and have begged pardon, and obtained and granted mutual forgiveness.

Would to God it might be the effect of our lamentable differences and contentions in later years, (as in all reason it ought to be,) to make us very fearful how we fall into the like again; at least to correct that sharpness, that acrimony and hatred wherewith those differences were managed, to the great scandal of our religion, and the exposing us all to be a prey unto our common enemy.

There will be still occasions of quarrelling, if we be so foolish as to lay hold on them and improve them. For we shall never be all of one opinion in every thing, which will occasion disputes, and they may occasion heats; and they may beget estrangements one from another, and thence may arise animosities and open breaches; unless we moderate ourselves, and religiously consider what we are a doing, what mischiefs we are drawing upon ourselves, when we engage so fiercely in contests about things perhaps of small moment, or things in which men will never be agreed, but there will be different judgments concerning then.

Let us, as was said before, be touched with such a lively sense that we are members of one and the very same body, and prefer the public good before our own private opinions and interests; and this will have a greater power to knit us faster together than any thing else can have to divide us one from another. If we have any regard to this, to the safety of our nation, to the safety of our religion, not only here but in all other Protestant countries abroad, we cannot but be inclined thereby to join our counsels, or studies and endeavours, as well as our prayers, for the preventing or quieting of all new quarrels among us: that, as we had almost undone ourselves by our hatreds and bitter contentions, so we may be preserved by a firm union in sincere love and brotherly affection.

Which is a virtue that our holy religion commends unto us above all other things. *Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body*[d]. Which the

[d] Col. iii. 12, 13, &c.

same apostle presses upon the Philippians in the most passionate and moving manner imaginable; *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love*, (which we cannot but feel to be exceeding great, if we be under the power of it,) *if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*[e].

This is sufficient to show, that if Christian religion have taken possession of our hearts, and bear any sway there, we shall be strongly knit together as one man, for the common good of the whole body to which we belong. And if we be, I have demonstrated how much this will contribute to the exaltation of our nation by unity and peace at home.

IV. But suppose a nation be assaulted from abroad, true religion will make them courageous and undaunted, being the mother of fortitude and valour; which raises the power, glory, and reputation of a nation to the greatest height.

1. And this it doth, because it unites them, as you have heard, in bands of mutual love and kindness; which gives them confidence in each other, as well as moves them to join their common counsels and joint endeavours for the public good and safety.

2. And then it makes all these counsels and enterprises go on smoothly and cheerfully, without those rubs and impediments which are wont to be raised by fears and jealousies, and distrusts one of another.

3. And thirdly, by increasing their treasure, as I have said, and giving them public spirits to incline them to part with it for the public good, it enables them to make such preparations for mutual defence as wisdom and counsel shall direct.

4. Which preparations also are managed by religion, with that industry, diligence, and frugality before mentioned; upon which depends great likelihood of good success. For that religion which makes a man industrious in his private calling, will much more engage him to the diligent and conscientious discharge of any public trust committed to him.

All which tends to inspire a people with courage, when they see they want nothing that is necessary for their defence, but only the divine aid and succour; which, as you shall hear

[e] Phil. ii. 1, 2.

anon, they cannot reasonably suspect will withdraw itself from a people *fearing God and working righteousness.* No, quite contrary, they ought to be confident of his presence with them, especially in all straits and difficulties: which confidence will marvellously heighten and raise their courage and resolution. For as it naturally makes a man very undaunted and valiant, when he is not conscious to himself of any base design or vile practice; so confidence in God, and full persuasion that he will be with us in an undertaking, doth exceedingly increase and exalt that courage which a good conscience breeds in us. And of this we ought not to doubt, when we are a truly religious, just, and holy people; devoted to the love of God, and of one another.

And as this mightily inspires a nation with confidence, so this unanimous courage and confidence in a nation no less daunts their enemies, and either deters them from invasion, or disheartens them in the attempt; for who is able to stand before a great people united among themselves, that fight not with divided affections, nor to serve particular interests and factions, but for the common preservation and the public good?

And now that I mention a great people, it puts me in mind of another thing which I will briefly touch.

V. True religion exalteth a nation by increasing it into a multitude of people; which evidently gives it renown by making a people powerful and formidable to its neighbours; especially when it abounds with people, not of a feeble, but of an able and strong constitution of body, as well as of virtuous minds. For so this wise man hath observed a little before my text, ver. 28. *In the multitude of people is the king's honour: but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.* Who is nothing if he have no subjects; but the more numerous they are, the greater is his force and his splendour at home, and his fame and reputation abroad; which very much depends upon the populousness of his country, when it is stored with such worthy persons as I have described.

Now, true religion increases a people into a multitude by chaste marriages, and banishing fornication and vagrant lusts; and also by that healthful state of body, wherein temperance, soberness, chastity, and industry preserves mankind. This is so plain that it needs no proof, and is one argument against

that impurity, filthiness, and debauchery, which hath exceedingly abounded among us; that it not only shuts men out of the happiness of the other world, (as St. Paul shows[f],) but hastens them also out of this, weakens and destroys their bodies, shortens their life, dispeoples their country, and makes a nation feeble and pusillanimous when it is generally infected with this disease. Upon which account it is the interest of all princes to punish the vices of this sort very severely; not only as displeasing to God, but as extremely disserviceable to themselves.

VI. From all which I might show how *righteousness exalteth a nation*, by inviting other people to resort unto it, and increase its numbers, either for their education or their improvement, among those who have gained a great reputation in the world for their wisdom or their sobriety and purity, or their unity and good government, their industry, their courage, &c., and all those excellent qualities from whence these things are derived.

But I need not add any thing more for the proof of what I undertook. Lay all these considerations together, and if wealth, if wisdom and knowledge, if unanimous affection to the public good, if peace and concord, if great numbers of people in health and strength, if fame and reputation, if fortitude and courage, if counsel and conduct, if confidence of success in all their enterprises, can raise and exalt the glory of a nation; then true religion and virtue (serious obedience to all the laws of Christ) is the exaltation of a nation. For all these are the fruits of righteousness, as I have plainly demonstrated, when it is generally practised.

For so this proposition is to be understood; *Righteousness exalteth a nation*, when that nation, that is, becometh righteous. The sole virtue indeed of the princes that govern it may do much towards it. For *a king that sitteth in the throne of judgment* (saith this wise man) *scattereth away all evil with his eyes*[f]; and again, ver. 26, *A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them*; that is, punisheth them severely. *Righteous lips are the delight of kings*, (i. e. of such wise kings,) *and they love him that speaketh right*[g]. They promote, that is, virtuous men, not flatterers, such as

[f] 1 Cor. vi. 9. [f] Prov. xx. 8. [g] Prov. xvi. 13.

speak what is true, not what they think will please, unto places of trust and authority. And *when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn*[h].

But though all this be true, yet it is because such princes are the blessed instruments of reforming a nation, (which begins in reforming the court, and those who are in authority,) by whose general amendment, by the people's becoming truly religious and virtuous, this observation of the wise man is completely fulfilled, that *righteousness exalteth a nation*, by the very natural effects of it, when it is heartily and universally practised.

III.

But these, though very great advantages in themselves, are small in comparison with that which follows, viz. the singular favour and blessing of the Divine providence, which is procured by the righteousness of a nation.

For the understanding of which, it must be considered, that the providence of God is the great and first mover, which turns about all the wheels of human affairs, and orders how and whither they shall go: whereby they are many times carried far otherwise than we design and contrive. This is a truth so often noted in this book, that from thence we may conclude it is a matter of very great moment; for it is not easy to number all the places. *The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord*[i], who gives, that is, what success he pleases to men's deliberations and discourses. And, ver. 9, *A man's heart deviseth his way*, (i. e. designs an end and the means to it,) *but the Lord directeth his steps;* to such an issue, perhaps, as he never thought of. And again, ver. 33 of the same chapter, *The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* The same we read, Prov. xix. 21, *There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.* And, xx. 24, *Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?* That is, as no man can take one step towards any thing he designs without permission from above; so it is impossible for him to know what the success will be of that which he projects. *The king's heart* (on whose motions

[h] Prov. xxix. 2. [i] Prov. xvi. 1.

we know the fate of kingdoms depends) *is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will*[k]. Once more, ver. 30, 31 of the same chapter, *There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord;* i. e. whatsoever warlike preparations any prince shall make, though never so great, and never so well conducted and managed, all is to no purpose, unless the Lord favour his arms, and give good success to his counsels and designs.

Which is the very ground and reason of our meeting here this day, to implore his blessing upon their majesties, and their forces by sea and land: whereby we make a solemn acknowledgment of the truth of what I have now said, that the disposal of all events depends upon the providence of God: which we ought therefore by all means to engage to be on our side. Particularly by humble and fervent and frequent prayer to him: which the holy Scripture calls *seeking the face*, that is, the favour of God, who alone can make our way prosperous, and in whose fear (as this wise man speaks, Prov. xiv. 26) *is strong confidence*, of good success, that is, in all enterprises, and protection in all dangers.

But if we have any serious belief of God and of his providence, we cannot imagine that it can be engaged to favour us by our prayers alone. They must never be omitted; but if we address ourselves to God with no resolutions of amendment, this very wise man hath told us our doom in Prov. xv. 8, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord;* he will reject it, especially when he brings it *with a wicked mind*[l], as if he thought, by his sacrifices, to bribe the Divine Majesty, and persuade him to wink at his sins. But, on the other side, he tells us in the very same breath, *The prayer of the upright is his delight;* which he repeats in the 29th verse, *The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.* Who devoutly acknowledging the Divine providence, and also studying sincerely to observe his commands, prevail with him to give them what they desire; his favour, protection, and blessing, to prosper them in all their undertakings.

The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that

[k] Prov. xxi. 1. [l] Prov. xxi. 27.

soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. He deceives himself, that is, who thinks to raise himself to greatness by wicked devices; in which he may prosper a while, but the event at last will disappoint his expectations: when truly religious men shall infallibly reap the fruit of their pious, just, and charitable labours for the good of others. The like we read Prov. xii. 3, *A man shall not be established by wickedness; but the root of the righteous shall not be moved.* And here in this chapter, ver. 11, *The house of the wicked shall be overthrown; but the tabernacle of the righteous shall flourish.* There was a great difference between a house and a tabernacle; the former being built strong and firm, to endure for an age or several generations; but the other (a tabernacle) was reared up only for a time, slightly jointed and put together, to be taken down and carried on a sudden any whither. And such is the providence of God, the wise man observes, over the righteous, that he makes his weak tabernacle abide and flourish: when the very house of the wicked not only decays, but is overturned. Thus the world hath seen many potent princes put down from their seat, and small ones raised up in their stead; according to the discourse of the pious father of this wise man, who bids us mark what he saith, Psalm xxxiii, where, after he had said, ver. 16, 17, *There is no king saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength; a horse is a vain thing to save a man, &c.*, he adds immediately, ver. 18, *Behold,* take notice of this, *the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him,* (of such he will take a special care, and exercise a most tender and watchful providence over them,) *upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in time of famine:* to preserve them, that is, in the greatest dangers, and deliver them out of the greatest straits.

And truly the providence of God is in justice engaged to give countenance and encouragement to true piety and virtue in the world. And though it do not move always so swiftly as we expect and desire, yet we may observe there have been such revolutions of Providence in all nations in one age or other, as have sufficiently demonstrated how much God concerns himself to bless those who live in observance of him, and to punish those who do otherwise.

I will not presume, now that it is time to draw towards a conclusion, to lay before you the story of the Jews, over whom this wise king reigned; but only say, that as God had chosen them from among all nations to be his people, planted them in a chosen land, and blessed them with wise and holy laws, promised them all manner of felicity upon condition of their obedience; so, notwithstanding this peculiar relation to him, the same Providence which promised them protection, safety and prosperity, if they obeyed him, threatened to abandon them unto inevitable ruin if they forsook him and rebelled against him. Whence those remarkable words, *O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them*[1], &c. Where he speaks as if it were not in his own power to bless them unless they would fear and obey him always; because God cannot do that at all, which he cannot do consistently with his wisdom, justice, and honour.

And however Divine Providence may please to order things in those nations who are not so nearly related to him, yet we cannot but think he will deal with us Christians, who are now become what they were, *his peculiar people*, by the very same measures he dealt with them, that is, bless us or curse us, according as we observe or break his holy laws.

But I see no reason to question his making this distinction even among infidels who know not the laws of Jesus Christ; if we may judge of what he doth now by what he did in ancient times: when the heathens themselves observed this difference, as appears by the writers of the Roman story, who take notice that while they were strict observers of the law of nations, and continued religious, frugal, industrious, sober, and moderate, (as they were in their beginning,) God's blessing rested upon them, and they prospered wonderfully whithersoever they went. But when they grew impious, luxurious, broke their faith, abounded with all manner of vice, they soon dwindled, grew weak, and lost their large dominions they had in the world. And had they been at the first rise of their empire "as vain as the Greeks (to use the words of a great divine[m] of our own, in the days before us,) as luxurious as the Asiatics, as perfidious

[1] Deut. v. 29. [m] Dr. Jackson. [Commentaries on the Creed, book vi. part 2. chap. 27. vol. v. p. 435.]

as the Carthaginians, as uncivil and barbarous as many other nations whom they conquered, they could not have been so constantly fortunate in their enterprises at home and abroad as they were for many years."

God indeed is a debtor to nobody; but such is his bounty, such his love to righteousness, of whatsoever sort it be, that he will not suffer moral virtue, civil justice, honesty and truth, and constant execution of laws, which in their kind and degree are good, to be wholly unrewarded; but by such means any nation in the world may be exalted above those who are otherways disposed.

How much more then may Christian people expect this favour from the Lord in the faithful observance of his holy laws! Did true righteousness, for instance, prevail in this Christian kingdom, what an happy people might we be! As happy as we have made ourselves notorious to all the world for the punishments God hath inflicted on us.

What were the late civil wars and the woful effects of them, but the calamities which God sent upon a sinful people for our disobedience to him? And since the wonderful restoration of the royal family and the monarchy, what were the pestilence, the fire, and other judgments which presently ensued, but tokens of God's continued displeasure against us for our abuse of his lovingkindness? We rioted upon his mercies, *we waxed fat and kicked against him*, we abandoned ourselves to lust, pride, and idleness, and to all manner of debauchery; nay, to irreligion, atheism, and infidelity; for which cause those heavy calamities fell upon us. And what was the effect of them? After we had felt the smart of so many terrible judgments, we fell into such implacable animosities and deadly hatreds one against another, that we drew upon ourselves the greatest plague of all, that of popery: which had set up its chapels, schools, and convents among us; and, had not God's mercy prevented by our late marvellous deliverance, would have brought in those whips, and gibbets, and racks, and fires, and other instruments of cruelty, wherewith we have seen it torturing the bodies and souls of innumerable good men and women in France and in other places. And shall we still adventure to continue an unreformed nation because God hath spared us from utter ruin? *After all this is come upon us for our evil deeds*, as

Ezra speaks, and *for our great trespass, and after he hath given us such a deliverance as this,* which we have lately received, *shall we again break his commandments?*

What a strange thing will it be not to believe our own experience, though we would not believe God's holy word! Which now, one would think, should have greater credit with us, when we have seen it so fully verified in ourselves, *that sin is a reproach to any people.* Which in reason should move us to try the truth of the other part of my text of which I have now treated; and by working righteousness, satisfy ourselves how it will exalt us. As I have proved it will, not only by its own natural consequences, (there being no virtue which tends not to greaten a nation that lives in the practice of it,) but by the special blessing of the Almighty; whose method this is, which he constantly observes, to *bless the righteous, and compass him with his favour as with a shield.*

Hear this wise man once more: *The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity*[n]. *The way of the Lord,* that is, this is the Divine method to give strength and power to upright men; or the very observance of the rules of virtue, (which may be meant here by *the way of the Lord,*) the keeping close to God's laws, and walking in his ways, inspires the upright with courage and resolution when any evil threatens them; but the *workers of iniquity* are feeble and poorspirited, and shall be broken in pieces by that destruction which is coming upon them. His father gives the reason of it: *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright*[o]. Let us love righteousness then, that we may be beloved of the Lord. And if we have any authority, let upright men have our countenance and favour, (as the glory and strength of the nation, the chariots and horsemen for the safeguard of their country,) that the righteous Lord may countenance us in all our ways and proceedings, and we may find him propitious to us on all occasions.

That is the use we ought to make of what hath been said.

1. First, let every one of us, being convinced of these truths, and seriously reflecting on them, resolve to consult the safety and happiness of the kingdom of which we are members, by

[n] Prov. x. 29. [o] Psalm xi. ult.

betaking ourselves hereafter to a religious course of life, in all holiness and righteousness all our days. Let us begin it this day, by making it a day not only of humiliation, but of serious and unfeigned repentance. Let it conclude in solemn resolutions of amendment of life. That, as by wickedness this nation hath been laid low, and made despicable in the eyes of all our neighbours, who neither loved nor feared us, because we had forsaken both our own and their true interest; so we may raise the reputation of it, and make it great, eminent, and illustrious, by the faithful practice of true religion and virtue.

2. And let us not only make this resolution, but make it good, by calling it often to mind, by representing to ourselves the advantages of sincere piety even in this present life, by settling this persuasion in our mind, that it is the interest of the nation to be religious. Which cannot fail to sway our affection to it; and what we love we always pursue till we have attained it. If we love then ourselves, if we love our nation, if we love their majesties, our government, our country, we shall love righteousness.

3. And since *righteousness exalteth a nation*, it is our interest to do all we can to exalt righteousness, and advance it to the greatest height, by being *zealous of good works*. We have been very zealous for things of little moment in comparison with the weighty matters of God's laws, very zealous to undo one another and to ruin our country. Let us now be as zealous for our common safety and preservation, by bending our most earnest endeavours *to provoke one another to love and to good works;* to be sincerely good ourselves, and to make others so likewise as much as lies in our power. That is, devoutly pious, strictly just and merciful, temperate and sober, diligent and industrious in our several callings and offices, public spirited, zealously concerned for the common good, *kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love; forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any;* as earnest against revenge as perhaps we have been for it, studying the things that make for peace; labouring to convince men of their errors with the meekness of wisdom, bearing with those whom we cannot convince, by no means quarrelling one with another about different opinions, but joining with one heart and one soul for the defence of our religion and our country, our laws and liberties.

Then we may promise to ourselves the Divine protection and blessing: God will make us great and powerful, and we shall tread upon the necks of our enemies. He will hear our prayers which we have now made unto him, (and I hope will continue to make every day, because nothing, as you have heard, can prosper without his blessing,) for the safety of their majesties, and the success of their arms in their present great undertaking for the necessary defence of their people. We need not *fear what man can do unto us;* no, nor fear *the arrows of the Almighty,* I mean the raging pestilence; nor devouring fire; nor that flood neither which St. John saw the dragon pour out of his mouth to drown the church; that is, popish persecution.

That grand oppressor, who hath raised himself by methods quite contrary to this of Solomon; and, as if he intended to disprove the truth of God's word, hath endeavoured to exalt his nation by nothing but fraud and forgery, perfidiousness and perjury, by breaking his faith and violating leagues and solemn treaties, by wrong and robbery, nay, by the utmost degree of cruelty and barbarity; this haughty oppressor, I say, who hath ruined many other countries as well as his own, shall not be able to hurt us: but God will succeed their majesties in the war wherein we are now engaged against him, and make them go on prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness.

For since that nation hath so highly affronted the Divine Majesty, (as well as abused all mankind with whom they have had to do,) as sure as God is in heaven, he will lay them low: because they have been so atheistical as to advance themselves by all manner of falsehood and treachery, injustice and cruelty; having mocked at those virtues, (truth and honesty, &c.) without which the world cannot subsist, but must be turned into a wilderness.

We cannot appoint times and seasons unto the Almighty Wisdom: but if the universal desire of all nations could prevail with God, we might be confident the time is come wherein he will *bring down the high looks of the proud,* (if I may apply the words of the Psalmist to this matter,) and *save the poor afflicted people* upon whom he hath trampled with scornful pride and cruelty.

He and his adherents cannot long prosper, one would think, by such impious politics as they have practised: but *the righteous Lord, who sitteth in the throne judgeth right,* will make all the world see by the judgment he will execute upon them, that he *loveth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be their portion to drink.*

But suppose God should defer this vengeance for some time, and suffer him to be a further scourge to a sinful world; nay, should let him be the *rod of his anger* to chastise us for our ingratitude to him: yet these three things are certainly true.

1. First, that he will not always bear with impious oppressors: but *though hand join in hand,* (as Solomon speaks, Prov. xi. 21, though one oppressor join to help another,) *the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

2. And that punishment will be very terrible when it comes. For *though mercy will soon pardon the meanest,* (as it is in the Book of Wisdom, vi. 4,) *yet mighty men shall be mightily tormented:* because, being ministers of his kingdom, they abused his power, and that wantonly; having abundant means to please themselves without doing the least hurt unto others.

3. And this comfort, in the mean time, may be administered unto all those who have amended their lives and grown better by God's former judgments, or by our late deliverance; that they will find God favourable unto them, to protect and deliver them in *the needful time of trouble,* should it please him to let it come again to try them. So we are assured by this wise man, who hath left us instructions of this kind also. You may find a great many together in the beginning of the eleventh chapter, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6, which are all I shall mention: *The integrity of the upright shall guide them; but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them. Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them; but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness.* The sense of all which is this, that the highest wisdom is to be sincerely good. There is no policy comparable to perfect integrity: which in difficult

times will guide and direct a man unto the surest way for his preservation: when nothing else will secure him, but contrary courses inevitably lead him unto his ruin.

God of his infinite mercy grant, that as we understand these things, so we may consider them and lay them to heart; yea, lay them up in our heart, and reflect upon them as frequently as they are repeated in this book: that we may make them the rule of our actions, and trust to them as the most certain way to safety and security (if not prosperity) in this world, as well as to eternal felicity in a better life.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

IN THE

ABBEY CHURCH AT WESTMINSTER,

NOVEMBER 26, 1691.

BEING

THE THANKSGIVING-DAY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THEIR MAJESTIES, THE SUCCESS OF THEIR FORCES IN REDUCING OF IRELAND, AND FOR THE KING'S SAFE RETURN.

Die Sabbati, 28 *Novemb.* 1691.

IT is ordered by the lords spiritual and temporal, in parliament assembled, that the thanks of this house shall be, and is hereby given to the lord bishop of Ely, for his sermon preached on Thursday last before this house in the Abbey church at Westminster, and he is hereby desired to print and publish the same.

MATH. JOHNSON,
Cler. Parliamentor.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE HOUSE OF LORDS, &c.

DEUT. IV. 9.

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart out of thy heart all the days of thy life.

THE Jewish nation being represented to us by St. Paul as our types and examples; and their history being written (as he informs us) *for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*[a]; we cannot have a more sure direction for the preservation and continuance of those great blessings which we come this day to acknowledge with praises and thanksgivings, than from the instruction which God himself here gives to that people by his servant Moses in the conclusion of his ministry among them.

They had seen strange things, such as no age had produced the like since the creation of the world.

They beheld innumerable signs and tokens of a Divine presence with them; and were surrounded with so many amazing proofs of an extraordinary Providence over them, that they could not doubt of God's singular favour towards them, nor of the continuance of his Divine protection: who doth not love to leave his own work imperfect, but designs to finish what he hath most graciously begun.

The only danger was lest they should forget all that their eyes had seen, or be so negligent as not to lay to heart the great goodness of the Lord; against which Moses here gives them this caution, *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, &c.*

[a] 1 Cor. x. 11.

And truly this is the only thing that we have to fear: who are a people also saved by the Lord, a people who have seen his wonderful works; and may rationally hope to see further effects of his almighty mercy, if we be not so senselessly careless as to let the memory of what God hath done for us slip out of our minds, and leave no impressions upon our hearts. Which would load us with so foul a guilt, that God might justly abandon us to all the evils from which he hath delivered us; and let us perish, even after we have been saved by his special providence.

I cannot therefore do you better service than to press upon you this weighty admonition of Moses the man of God, as the most certain means of our preservation, and the best expression of our gratitude, *Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart out of thy heart all the days of thy life.*

In which words it is easy to observe two things:

First, it is here too plainly supposed that men are very apt to forget even those wonderful works which they have seen with their own eyes. Otherwise there would have been no need of such great caution as is here given to the Jews, to *take heed,* and not only take heed, but to *keep their soul;* nay, to keep it *diligently,* lest they should forget what their eyes had seen. For without *heed,* and *diligent* heed, and careful observance of themselves, he knew these things would soon slip out of their thoughts, and be no more remembered. And therefore,

Secondly, we ought to use our most serious endeavours not to *forget* them; no, not to forget them *as long as we live:* but to preserve the remembrance of them to the very end of our days. For so it follows in the last clause, *lest they depart out of thy heart all the days of thy life.*

Which being the principal thing here intended, it is fit I should begin with that; and reserve the supposal, as an argument to inforce this duty, if I have time for it: therefore we ought to take care to keep in mind *the things which our eyes have seen;* because we are very prone to forget them.

Now when he bids us take heed lest we forget them, it is as much as if he had charged us to remember them. And to remember them is not barely to call them to mind, or to keep

them in mind; but to have our hearts also duly affected with them. For in the holy language all such words as this, which belong to the mind, include the affections, and such actions also as are agreeable to such affections. To omit the many instances there are of this in the book of God, Moses himself here gives us this explication of his own words, when he charges the Israelites to take heed lest the things they had seen did depart out of their heart all the days of their life. There (in the heart) they were to preserve such an affectionate remembrance of them, as never to forget to perform the duties unto which they were obliged by such wonderful works as God had done to engage them to him.

Now this being premised, I have nothing to do but to consider,

First, what the things were that their eyes had seen.

2. And then, secondly, I shall be your remembrancer, by setting before you a few of the things that our eyes likewise have beheld.

3. And lastly show you what suitable affections ought to be in our hearts, and what behaviour becomes those (or how they ought to live) who have seen such things.

1. As for the first of these, the things which the Israelites had seen were of two sorts: for they had been in very great dangers, and they had received as great deliverances. Both of these are so well known, that I need but briefly touch them.

Nothing is more famous in their story than the affliction which they suffered a long time in the land of Egypt. Where they groaned under such heavy burdens, that when God sent a deliverer to them, *they hearkened not unto him for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage*[b]; that is, they were so oppressed, they could not think, much less hope for any relief. From which they were no sooner redeemed, but they fell into such dismal straits, at the Red sea, that they utterly despaired of safety. And when they had passed that danger, Amalek came forth with all his power to oppose their passage through the wilderness. Where they were so distressed with hunger and with thirst, that they wished themselves in Egypt again, rather than die in the desert, as they fancied they must for want of food.

[b] Exod. vi. 9.

These were some of their dangers; in all which they found God wonderfully merciful unto them. For they were delivered out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage, with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm. The Red sea opened a way for them to walk through it on dry ground. He gave them a glorious victory over Amalek, which he ordered Moses to record in a book for a memorial. He made water to gush out of a rock, which followed them in a perpetual stream to give them drink: and he showered down bread from heaven upon them for to eat.

These and such like were the difficulties and the deliverances which their eyes had seen, and which it concerned them never to forget.

2. And some things like to these have our eyes beheld; and this so lately, that it may well be expected they should be in our memory. I wish they had not departed from our hearts. Which were this time three year very sensible of the great danger wherein we were of being thrown into a worse than Egyptian bondage. For we saw our laws so boldly violated and trampled under feet, that we could not but fear the loss of all our liberties. Many loyal persons were turned out of their freeholds without any legal process: several of our bishops imprisoned, and afterwards indicted as malefactors; not for any evil they had done, but merely for making an humble petition that they might be permitted not to do what they thought to be evil. We saw the main body of the clergy in the same danger: most men thrown out of civil and military employments who would not help to enslave their fellow-subjects; all our corporations subverted, and their rights and liberties destroyed; a great many men put into places of the highest trust, who, by the laws, were not capable of any trust at all.

We saw likewise mass-houses set up in several parts of the kingdom; popish seminaries openly erected; four Romish bishops ordained, who took upon them to exercise the papal jurisdiction in all the quarters of this realm. Where all manner of endeavours were used, by threats and promises, to draw men to assist unto their own destruction, by taking away all our legal fences and securities. In one word, we saw the very foundations of our ancient government about to be razed, and in great measure overturned: the whole kingdom of Ireland

actually put into the power of Romish butchers, who, in the memory of many of us, embrewed their hands in the blood of our protestant brethren there; having massacred above an hundred thousand of them, in a time of perfect peace, when they had no suspicion of any harm from them.

This is a short representation of the dangers in which we lately were; which I hope we have not quite forgotten: for then God may justly throw us back again into them, after he hath in a wonderful manner rescued us out of them.

For behold, when we were in this distress, and so perplexed that we knew not what to do, when *all faces*, as the prophet speaks[c], *were turned into paleness*, and men's hearts failed them for fear of what was coming upon them, God sent deliverance unto us by a great prince; whose heroic spirit was stirred up to venture his person, and all his worldly interest, to free us from our impendent dangers.

Many things strangely concurred to favour his design. The very wind and the sea were favourable to him. God bowed the hearts of all the people of these realms, as one man, to wish well to him, and the hearts of many to assist him. Never was there a more universal consent to any enterprise; never was any more easily successful. All opposition in a short time vanished; the forces that were raised to enslave us helped to deliver us. In brief, a long laid design, which had been cunningly managed for many years, and so craftily carried on, that it was almost brought to perfection before it was generally perceived, was blown away and dashed in pieces, like a bubble, in an instant.

This certainly was the Lord's doing, and ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. Especially when we consider by how long a chain of wonderful providences God hath hitherto secured this great deliverance to us. No year hath passed since this happy revolution, wherein we have not seen most remarkable instances of his watchful care over us. And this year hath crowned them all, by the extraordinary success with which God hath blessed their majesties' forces in Ireland. Where all the armies of the enemy are vanquished: their strong holds taken or surrendered; the very robbers have forsaken the woods and fastnesses to put themselves under the

[c] Jer. xxx. 6.

protection of their majesties, and submit to their government. This reduction of that kingdom hath been attended with so many strange circumstances, that all considering persons, who are acquainted with them, cannot but acknowledge the hand of Heaven therein.

Which hath appeared also in the merciful preservation of his majesty's royal person, from all the dangers to which he was exposed during his late expedition abroad; in the protection of the queen, and defeating all designs of giving us disturbance here at home; and in the bringing back his majesty to us in health and safety.

By which means we are preserved in the peaceable possession of those blessings which of all other are the most valuable, and which we hope will be secured to our posterity, as the best inheritance we can leave them; our holy religion, and the English liberties. Yea, our very lives we ought to consider are redeemed from destruction by this signal deliverance, which God hath wrought for us. For in a little time, if he had not most graciously interposed, they would have been at the mercy of our cruel enemies; unless we had left our own dear country, and fled for safety, as the French protestants were forced to do, into foreign places. And yet, alas! whither we should have fled would have been hard to find: for all other protestant churches would have been undone, together with us, and presently buried in our ruins.

Can we be unmindful of such a deliverance as this? or insensible of the great goodness of God, who hath preserved us from losing all the happy fruits of it, by the marvellous successes God hath given to their majesties' arms in Ireland this summer?

Can we forget those frightful dangers which we have escaped; which would have been ten times more dreadful, had we relapsed into them? Shall we be so stupid as to have no more sense than the beasts, which think of no danger but just when it stares them in the face? This would be the greatest danger of all. And therefore let us seriously consider how we ought to be affected, both with our past dangers, and with our late deliverances; that we may behave ourselves suitable to the obligations that are upon us. Which is the last thing I propounded to be considered, in pursuance of this caution given by Moses of old; which concerns us as much now, that

we *take heed to ourselves lest we forget the things which our eyes have seen, and lest they depart out of our hearts all the days of our life.*

I.

And first let us reflect upon our dangers; and seriously consider what the remembrance of them requires of us. To which if we apply ourselves, these three things will immediately offer themselves to our thoughts:

First, that we ought to repent of those sins which brought us into them.

Secondly, make good those pious resolutions which, it is to be hoped, we made in the time of our distress.

Thirdly, abhor the spirit of popery, which turns the world upside down, and, to settle itself, puts all things into confusion.

For the first of these, it is very proper on such a day as this to call ourselves to an account, and examine wherein we have any way offended God, that we may be humbled for it, and repent of it; because, as our sins brought us into all the forementioned dangers, and if they be not amended will throw us into new ones, which may prove our utter undoing; so the due consideration of them will serve to magnify the goodness of God, and raise our thankfulness unto him, who, notwithstanding our high provocations, was pleased, of his infinite mercy, to deliver us.

There is no sin of which we have been guilty, but contributed more or less to our late dangers; but some sins led us directly into them. I will mention a few.

First, our remissness in religion; in which some among us were so far gone, as to say they could discern no such great difference between us and Rome, that we need make a contest about it. This was very comfortable news, no doubt, to those of the Romish faction, and gave them no small encouragement to attempt what our eyes have seen.

2. And so did the coldness and carelessness which was too notorious in many places in the duties of religion; scarce an handful of people appearing in many churches at divine service, when the play-houses were crowded every day with numerous spectators. This I make no question emboldened their hopes of prevailing; for why should not any religion serve those who made little or no use of religion?

As we love our souls, or tender our worldly interest, let these things be amended. Let us grow more in love with our religion; and let us express it in greater devotion, and more frequent attendance upon all the duties of God's worship and service. For it is impossible to be eminent in any other virtue, if we be negligent in this. *Necesse est virum bonum summæ erga Deum pietatis esse,* as Cicero himself truly resolves; "It is absolutely necessary that a good man have the highest piety towards God, without which he cannot be good."

3. And this no doubt hath been the great source of all the wickedness which hath abounded among us; that men so seldom think of God, and so little regard the solemn performance of the duties belonging to his worship and service. I will not mention the infamous debaucheries that have been committed in many places, whereby our religion was dishonoured and endangered.

4. There is another thing of which soberer persons have been too guilty; in their extreme severity towards those who differed from them in some things, though in most they perfectly agreed: which hath proceeded to such a degree of rage, that generally we were more kind to papists than we were to one another. This was the very thing that made them so bold and confident in their attempts upon our religion and liberties; which they saw we ourselves were destroying by our mutual hatreds.

These hatreds were the very foundation upon which they built their hopes. These were the engines which they managed with all their hearts to accomplish our ruin. For the bitter strife and contention which ensued hereupon, our zealous endeavours to undue one another, (even when we differed only about civil, not religious matters,) were strong invitations and manifest opportunities to the common enemy to make their assaults upon us; seeing such a wide breach opened by ourselves, at which they might easily enter.

5. What shall I say of that base selfishness which hath reigned among us? that inordinate affection to men's own private interest, separate from the public good and the love of their country? This moved too many to go along with the popish faction, and lend them their helping hand in divers things, which they could not but see manifestly tended to our

undoing; a sin which the very heathens abhorred, who could not be tempted to betray their country.

Lastly, that bad disposition of mind mentioned by our Saviour in the conclusion of all those evil things that proceed out of the heart of man, viz. ἀφροσύνη, *foolishness*, (we translate it,) or 'inconsiderateness,' hath had no small hand in our dangers. *From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*[c]; these defile a man. There is no nation I know of wherein this vice of inconsideration hath had greater power than in ours: where we have been so foolish (to omit other instances which I am loath to name) as to suffer our sworn enemies to make us their tools; and would not see how they managed us, to work our destruction by our own hands.

For having taken great care long ago that our divisions should not be healed, sometimes they courted one party to fall upon the other; and then turned about and courted the contrary party to take their revenge for it. Sometimes the laws must be put in execution with all imaginable strictness, and then this strictness must be condemned as antichristian rigour against our brethren.

Sometimes we were the favourites, and after a short courtship bestowed upon us we were turned off, and our brethren that dissent from us were complimented, as if they had been the only darlings! Thus they played us one against another a long time, and we were so blind as not to see what they were adoing. We could not, or would not understand, that they loved none of us, but designed the utter ruin of us all. And this in the vilest and most infamous manner, by making us the instruments of our own destruction; unto which we contributed with all our might, by our fierce oppositions and violent clashings one against another.

Of which folly we ought most heartily to repent, together with all those other sins I have mentioned, as endangering the loss of two of the most precious things in the whole world, religion and liberty. But we do not truly repent of these sins, unless we become more zealous both for our religion and in it:

[c] Mark vii. 21.

more kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love, more public spirited also, not *seeking merely our own things, but every one also the things of others;* i. e. the common good; and be likewise at greater unity among ourselves, by loving one another with a pure heart fervently.

Of this let us take a special care, lest our affections (which seemed to be disposed to reconciliation) be again alienated one from another, by our present differences. What? cannot we differ in opinion but we must declare war one against another? Or must we break off all friendship and kindness, yea, all acquaintance and conversation, and look upon one another as infidels? Nay, I think we ought to have a greater kindness for infidels than many of us had one for another in our former differences and contentions. Which, for God's sake, let us not act over again. If we cannot agree, yet let us not quarrel; no, nor be angry, much less furiously bent against those who are not of our mind; nor pass hard censures on those, as men of no conscience, who (for instance) have endeavoured, by the best and most justifiable means, as they think, to preserve the reformed religion and the English liberties. For such censuring looks like raving, and that is no good sign men are in the right.

Let us learn at last to be sober and wise, to love one another, and to live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with us.

In the time of our distress, I cannot but hope we had very good resolutions about such matters, and intended hereafter to be more moderate. Let us now therefore make them good.

II. Which is the second thing I intended to press under this head. It is scarce possible for a man when he is in great danger not to consider his ways, and to resolve he will avoid those things which evidently brought him into it; nay, to make vows that he will remember those holy resolutions. There was great reason, I am sure, for every one so to do. We were strangely false to God and to our own souls, if the methods of his providence wrought no such pious purposes in us; and if we do not now make them good, we are strangely false also to our own promises and vows.

If one might judge of all places in the kingdom by some, one would conclude, that as our coldness and carelessness in reli-

gion had brought us into great dangers, so our dangers had quickened many souls to greater fervency and zeal. For we saw our churches filled, our communions thronged with larger assemblies, as if the fear that was upon us had moved us to flee to the table of the Lord for sanctuary, as Joab did to the horns of the altar. God forbid that any such souls should ever hereafter forget those fears, or forget those resolutions which their fears created, of being more diligent and devout in God's service. Take heed, I beseech you, lest you live to see the day when all the apprehensions you had of God, and of your duty to him are vanished, and you are fallen back into your former remissness. For what can bring you out of it again but some such danger? And do you either desire, or hope, or fear to see such dangers again, as you have lately seen? I am sure you do not, you cannot desire it; and you cannot hope for that which you cannot desire: and if you fear such a time may come again, it is because you resolve to deserve it, by continuing those sins which brought you into such distresses.

Consider, I beseech you, did we not for instance seem all inclined to be at peace one with another? Did we not at length begin to reflect with grief upon our zealous folly, in our indiscreet behaviour (to say no worse) one towards another, upon the account of the differences that were among us? Did we not resolve to be friends upon some terms or other, to forget what was past, and to join together heartily for our mutual safety and preservation? And do we now break out again into the same outrages, as if we had been wholly strangers to all such good dispositions? Do our spirits boil up with anger at the very mention of reconciliation? As if we had no resolutions but to return to our former animosities and enmities; to rake into all miscarriages; revenge all the wrongs that have been done us; renew our ancient strife and contention, wrath and bitterness, and all the rest of those sins which brought us to the very brink of destruction?

What can we think then will become of us; having, by the dangers into which these sins threw us, seen such reason to reform them, as I hope we shall never see again? If they be not amended by what we have seen, we shall be in danger to perish in our sins.

For should we fall into new dangers of that kind which we

have already seen, they will not in all probability be intended to reform us, but to ruin us.

But I must prosecute this no further, because there is a third thing which deserves to be pressed longer than I have time for it.

III. Learn, I beseech you, by the dangers wherein you have been, to abhor the spirit of popery: which, it is evident by what was lately acted among us, is void of all truth and of all mercy, nay, of common humanity. None can trust those safely that are possessed with it, when they are in power. No obligations can hold them, (for they had the greatest to treat us otherwise than they did lately,) no promises, no oaths, no ties of gratitude are of any force to bind them; but this spirit breaks through all, being the spirit of falsehood and violence, made up of perfidiousness and cruelty.

Witness the tragedy it hath acted in France, (if you will not take the character of it from what your eyes have seen at home,) which hath been accounted the most moderate of all the catholic countries, as they call them; but they have taught us that there is no such thing as moderation among them. For there they have not only violated the faith of all edicts, treaties, promises, and oaths, but persecuted those of the reformed religion in such an outrageous manner, that their cruelty can scarcely be matched in the history of the ancient pagan persecution of the primitive Christians. And yet so little of common honesty there is in that spirit where it prevails, so little of shame, they have had the face to publish to the world that no such thing as severity hath been used there; but they have made all their conversions in the most gentle and sweetest methods imaginable.

Be sensible, I beseech you, of the infinite goodness of God, who hath prevented these gentle methods here; in which we have too much reason to think they would have proceeded, (had they not been seasonably stopped,) without shame, without remorse, without any tenderness, even for those who had been so foolish as to assist them to undo themselves and others.

For we see they had the confidence so far to abuse our late sovereign, as to make him declare that none of our laws were violated, none of our rights or liberties invaded; when all the world saw them break through the very strongest laws which

were purposely made for the security of our most holy religion.

Let it be a warning to you not to trust them, though they give never such goodly words, and engage their faith to you in the most solemn promises. Have nothing to do with that spirit, which will infallibly delude you, if you hearken to it, into your destruction. Suffer not yourselves by any artifice to be inveigled into a belief that they can be innocent and harmless. For whatsoever declarations they make to this purpose, they are mere impostures, and most dangerous snares laid to entrap you; persecution being of the very spirit of the church of Rome, by its principles, by its doctrines, and by its practices; which cannot alter.

This hath been so clearly and so lately demonstrated by those of our church, that I shall only briefly remember you:

Their principle is, that we who stand separated from their communion are heretics, who must perish everlastingly.

Their doctrine is, that the secular power ought to extirpate all those whom their church condemns as heretics.

And their practices are sufficiently known to be consonant to this: for where have they failed, when they had power, to exterminate those of our religion?

Blessed be God then, should we all say, that this spirit is, if not quite cast out of these three kingdoms, in a fair way to be utterly disabled from acting such tragedies among us as they were manifestly preparing for us. What shall we render to the Lord for his goodness towards us? Can it be ever forgotten by us? And how can we remember it without such affections as are suitable to such a remarkable deliverance?

Which is the second part of this discourse.

II.

We ought to reflect frequently upon our wonderful deliverance from those apparent dangers wherewith we were compassed: and consider what the remembrance of it requires of us.

There is no need, I hope, to go about to prove that God hath wrought a great deliverance for us. If any be so unhappy as to question it, they may soon be resolved by asking themselves. Would we be willing to be in the same condition wherein

we were three years ago, in the power of our popish enemies, who, without the help of our deliverer, might have done what they pleased with us? Nobody, sure, can think of being in such a condition with any satisfaction. And therefore I must conclude we all own the great mercy of God to us in a most seasonable deliverance.

Let us see how we ought to be affected with it. Which is a subject very large and copious: but it may suffice to suggest these four things to your Christian consideration:

First, we ought so to remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, as never to fail to bless and praise him for it, as long as we have a day to live.

Secondly, we ought to be very grateful to the glorious instrument of our deliverance.

Thirdly, look upon ourselves as preserved on purpose by God, that we may live to the praise and glory of his grace and mercy towards us.

Fourthly, and then we may learn hereby to place our trust and confidence in the same mercy for the time to come.

1. There can be no dispute of the first of these, that the praises of God ought to be continually in our mouth; for the great thing he hath done for us. Nothing can be more unbecoming, nothing more disingenuous and vile, than instead of this, to hear such undutiful murmurings, repinings, and complaints, as too many mouths are filled withal: which would be quite silenced if we would make it our business, as it is our duty, to think how much we owe to God, and what thanks we ought to be giving continually for the deliverance he hath wrought for us, and for all the blessings which by that means we enjoy.

There is nothing can be more rational than this.

2. And one would think there should be as little dispute about the second; that we ought to be highly grateful to the glorious instrument of our deliverance. For whose coming all men longed. The news of whose arrival was every where welcomed with the greatest joy. Which I hope we have not already forgotten, nor suffered the benefits we have received thereby to slip out of our mind. For we owe the happy liberty we now enjoy, of worshipping God here together, according to the rules of the gospel, unto that deliverance: which

hath been followed with a very long train of labours and toils which his majesty hath undergone, and of marvellous successes God hath blessed him withal, for the confirming the peace and prosperity which is continued to us by his means. With how many difficulties hath he wrestled? Through what hardships hath he waded? And to how great hazards hath he exposed his royal person, both this year and the last, that we might reap the peaceable fruit of them in safety and ease? If it had not been for his courage and conduct, our Irish brethren might have still languished under those heavy oppressions from which they are now freed. The common enemy might have still made greater ravages in our neighbouring countries, if he had not stood in the gap to stop their fury: which we ourselves might have felt long before this time, had not God raised him up to be our deliverer, and strengthened his hands to maintain what he had achieved.

How vast are the obligations which by these things he hath laid upon us! Can we think that we have ever done enough for him who hath done and endured so much for our preservation?

The ancient heathens thought themselves so much indebted to the deliverers of their country, that they set no bounds to their affection, but honoured them as gods. This was an excess of gratitude to them. But had they given them all the honour that is short of divine, owned them for gods upon earth, I mean for their kings and governors; they had not done amiss. For nature hath ever taught mankind to pay all manner of service to such as saved their lives, and redeemed their liberties, when they were in danger to lose them. Which was all, I am apt to think, that the ancient heathen meant, by calling such persons their gods; that is, their kings, their great benefactors: which was the name they frequently gave to their princes, especially to such as had been their deliverers. Whom they honoured under that notion while they lived, and superstitious posterity pursued them with divine honours when they were dead.

How could this nation then do less than own him for their king, who had been their deliverer from slavery both of soul and body? This is no more than common gratitude hath inclined all mankind to do for those who only preserved their

civil liberties when they were invaded. He that redeemed them they thought had a good title to them; and by rescuing them from their oppressor, entered upon all the legal rights belonging to him. This hath been the constant sense of all nations.

And every good man among us who is of a contrary judgment, I would willingly believe, seriously laments his infelicity, that he cannot acknowledge his present majesty with such gratitude as is due to so great a benefactor. Which will not suffer those who feel the least touch of it to do, or to speak, or so much as think any thing to the prejudice of him who hath ventured his life many a time to preserve our religion and liberty. Yea, we ought in gratitude to him, as well as out of love to ourselves, to give him the utmost assistance we are able for the support and security of his government: that is, in truth, for the defence of our country and religion. Which is the only thing that he can be thought to design, unless it be the preservation of the reformed religion every where, and of the liberties of these parts of the world which are in danger by the ambition of a powerful oppressor. And this is matter of joy to us, and thanksgiving to God this day, that however some particular persons may be ill affected, the body of the people, it appears by their representatives, are unanimously disposed to grant his majesty a supply as large as his desires, for the carrying on what he hath so happily begun.

3. And if we look upon our preservation as a most special providence of God, a kind of new birth of this nation, a resurrection from the dead, or at least a recovery from a desperate disease, a marvellous deliverance, wherein the wisdom, power, and goodness of God most seasonably appeared for our rescue from the most dreadful dangers; we cannot think he hath done all this for us merely that we may live to eat, and drink, and sleep in safety; much less to satisfy our sinful lusts and appetites: but that we may live to the praise of the glory of his grace and mercy towards us. For what else should God concern himself in our preservation? And therefore let us make that use of it, to live as becomes a people that are saved by the Lord; to serve him faithfully in the steady and constant performance of our duty, according to the directions of our holy religion; which he hath continued to us in its purity by this deliverance.

Such an extraordinary obligation manifestly challenges some extraordinary return of duty. But what return, I beseech you, have we as yet made which may be thought in any measure suitable to the benefits we have received? Nay, what have we not done to provoke God to forsake us after he hath been so wonderfully kind to us? Is there any one sin that we have amended? Doth not all manner of profaneness, doth not hatred and uncharitableness abound as much as ever among us? When there hath been such a great change, an amazing turn of affairs by the late revolution, are any of our hearts changed and turned sincerely to the Lord? Do not all men go on in the old track as if we had done nothing amiss?

I am very loath to put any melancholy thoughts into your minds upon a day of rejoicing; but assure yourselves, as it was God's intention in his deliverance to move and engage us to be a better people, so if we defeat his intentions by continuing as bad as we were before, we ought in reason to expect that he will alter the course of his providence towards us. And as Moses elsewhere speaks in this book, *as he rejoiced over us to do us good, so he will rejoice over us to destroy us and bring us to nought*[d]. Let us not run this hazard, I beseech you, but endeavour seriously to answer his expectation, by learning from this deliverance, *to fear the Lord our God,* (as Moses speaks,) *to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and serve him with all our heart, and with all our soul; to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which he hath commanded us for our good*[e]. And then will the Lord love us and bless us, he will multiply his mercy upon us and make us a truly great and happy people: *For he is our praise, he is our God, who hath done for us these great and terrible things which our eyes have seen.*

4. And hath taught us thereby, that did we thus remember his mercies in our late deliverance, we might then hope in the same mercy for the future; yea, be confident God will continue to prosper their majesties' arms, and bless them with greater successes in the present war wherein they are engaged: which we cannot but wish unless we be in love with calamities, or our forgetfulness of former dangers makes us fearless of any

[d] Deut. xxviii. 63. [e] Deut. x. 11.

future; or our discontents throw such a mist before our eyes, that we cannot discern our friends from our enemies.

Let me entreat you to consider what desolations threaten us here in a protestant country if the French should prevail, when they have made such havoc in Germany among those who are as catholic as themselves. Where they have laid the most beautiful cities in ashes, only because they could not keep them any longer in their possession. As if the world were made for them alone, and none else were worthy to inhabit it; but every place must be made desolate if they cannot continue in it.

Unto what pitch of proud wrath, or rather diabolical fury are they arrived! which may justly make us look upon them not only as the enemies of all protestants, but of all Christians; nay, of all mankind. Whose interest it is to unite all their power to pull them down and chain them up, that they may not be able to make any further ravage in the world with their infernal troops.

It is manifest at what they aim, and how they intend to treat all those who become their slaves; and therefore, as we have the highest reason to bless the goodness of God this day for driving them out of the kingdom of Ireland, where they designed, no doubt, to settle themselves as a fair step to master us also; so it is the utmost degree of infatuation to favour their pretensions, or not vigorously to oppose the progress of their arms: for it is to oppose robberies and rapes, hellish cruelties and utter devastations; it is to assert the common right of mankind against a boundless oppressor, who forges a title at his pleasure to any country which he hath a mind to invade.

And he hath invaded so many, that there are innumerable souls in several places of the world, who cry out continually in the anguish of their spirits, as the psalmist doth, *O God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: and render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they speak so disdainfully, and make such proud boasting, &c.* And he who rules in all the kingdoms of the children of men, *all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase;* will at length hear the sighs and groans of those poor wretches whom that

oppressor hath made very miserable, and will dash likewise all the designs that are against us here in these kingdoms, if we be not so ungrateful to him as *not to regard the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands.*

For when did the hand of God appear more visibly than it hath done of late, in defeating the attempts that have been made in these three kingdoms upon our religion and liberties? And can we think that God intends they should rise up again, who have been so remarkably confounded? No, surely, if we be not so wickedly unthankful as to forget the hand that hath saved us, or slight his mercies towards us. There is the remaining danger, and therefore let us *take heed to ourselves, and keep our souls diligently, lest we forget the things our eyes have seen, and lest they depart out of our heart all the days of our life.*

This is a thing which requires very great care, because we are naturally forgetful creatures, apt to be unmindful of benefits, and in this particular case shall meet with many attempts upon us to make us (like the old Israelites) disgust our present happiness, and, in effect, wish ourselves again in Egypt. Which I have not time left to represent so effectually as it deserves, but must only entreat you to be aware of this danger, and watch yourselves so carefully that nothing efface the sense of God's great goodness to you in the late deliverance he hath given you.

And then he who hath hitherto heard our prayers, will still fulfil our humble petitions. He will hear the cry of those miserable people who are undone by a haughty oppressor; though *he bear long,* (as it is in the gospel for this day,) *he will avenge his own elect; yea, he will avenge them speedily.* And we may rationally hope he will also preserve us from falling into his cruel hands. He *will stretch forth his hands against the furiousness of our enemies, and put them to shame that hate us.* He will go on to *disappoint them, and cast them down;* and as the psalmist elsewhere prays, *reward them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their own inventions; recompense them after the work of their hands; and pay them what they have deserved:* in one word, *break them down, and not build them up.*

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth us: for his

mercy endureth for ever: He will not forsake the work of his own hands.

But we may take the boldness to sing on this day of thanksgiving, as the church doth upon the like occasion, *We wait for thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple. This God* (who hath done such great things for us) *is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide unto death.* Amen[f].

[f] Psalm xlviii. 9, 14.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN

AT WHITEHALL,

APRIL 8, 1692.

BEING

THE FAST-DAY APPOINTED BY HER MAJESTY, TO IMPLORE GOD'S BLESSING ON THEIR MAJESTIES' PERSONS, AND THE PROSPERITY OF THEIR ARMS BOTH AT LAND AND SEA.

Published by Her Majesty's special command.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE QUEEN,

April 8, 1692[a].

Numbers x. 9.

And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.

THE world, we see, is made up of vicissitudes and changes; there being *a season for every thing, a time to every purpose under heaven: a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time of war, and a time of peace*, as Solomon speaks in Eccles. iii. 1, &c. One of those doth but make way for the other: the true use of war being to seek a good peace, and the ill use of peace being wont to beget a war.

My text makes mention of both; their *going to war* being supposed in the beginning, and their being *saved from their enemies*, and so settled in peace, being promised in the conclusion of it. For it consists of three parts.

A supposition, a duty, and the success of its performance.

1. The supposition is double: that the Israelites, as well as

[a] [By order of the queen in council, (March 21, 169½,) during the king's absence on the continent, a special form of prayer with fasting was drawn up for the eighth of April, that day being appointed as a fast-day "for supplicating Almighty God for the burden of our sins, and for imploring his blessing and protection in the preservation of their majesties' sacred persons, and the prosperity of their majesties' arms both at land and sea:" and "to be continued to be used on the respective fast-days appointed to be solemnly kept every second Wednesday of the month successively during the present war." — London Gazette.]

other people might be oppressed by their enemies; and that in this case they might lawfully *go to war* with them.

2. The duty is single, though containing many in it; which is, to *blow an alarm with the trumpets.*

3. The success is again double, *to be remembered before God*, and to be *saved from their enemies.*

I.

I shall say little of the first of these; which is as true now as it was then. Unless all the world would become Christians, and those Christians likewise obey the gospel, there will be such injustice and oppression, violence and rapine, as will make war necessary for the safety and preservation of those who are innocent.

In an ill-natured, angry, and covetous world, we must not expect that all men will be our friends: and some people love themselves so much, that they have no affection left for their neighbours. Nay, this very thing makes them hate others, because they love themselves so inordinately: they cannot be their own friends, they imagine, unless they be other men's enemies. Their own well-being consists in making others miserable. And they never think themselves to have riches, honour, dominion and greatness enough, if there remains any of these to their neighbours.

Now what greater service can be done to these ravenous oppressors than to broach such a welcome doctrine as this; that the hands of good Christians are so tied up by their religion, that they may not oppose their ambition, rapine and cruelty by force of arms, nor demand reparation by that way, when all other fairer means are ineffectual for all the damages they have sustained, and are likely, without remedy, to endure for ever?

A fancy so absurd, that I do not think it worth the confutation: but shall only note, that the Israelites extended this liberty of going to war, which the law gave them, a great deal too far; as Christians since have been apt to do. For they did not confine it to their necessary defence, or seeking redress of wrongs, and the easing themselves of the burden of oppressors, but there being two sorts of war which they managed, one by the divine commandment, (which was only against the

seven nations in the land of Canaan, whom God for their abominable wickedness had doomed to utter destruction, and made the Israelites the executioners of his vengeance,) the other at their own choice, against any other people, as occasion should require: their doctors fancied it a sufficient reason for this latter sort of war upon their neighbours, merely to advance the glory and dominion, the empire and majesty of Israel, (as their phrase is,) though they had done them no manner of injury [a].

Which is the very notion by which the grand oppressor of this age governs himself, and justifies his wars. But the ancient Christian doctors have taught us better than those old masters in Israel, or the new Christian politicians. Among whom St. Austin fears not to call such a war *grande latrocinium* [b], 'a greater sort of robbery,' a public burglary, (as I may call it in the language of our law,) which is so much the more villanous because committed by authority. Nay, it is an ancient tradition recorded by Eusebius, Epiphanius [c] and others, who received it from the east, that when Noah divided the earth among his sons and nephews, he bound them by an oath not to covet nor invade each other's territories; and whosoever transgressed the law of this oath was solemnly cursed by the very words of it, with all his posterity, to utter perdition.

These were the old principles of religion, (unto which, blessed be God, their present majesties closely adhere,) that wars are not to be undertaken but for the defence or the recovery of our rights.

II.

In which case there was a duty incumbent upon the old Israelites before they began the war; which shall be the principal subject of my discourse, together with the success or fruit of it when religiously performed. It was, to *blow an alarm with the trumpets:* which is the only phrase in my text that hath any difficulty in it, and must be explained a little before any useful instruction can be drawn from it.

You read in the beginning of this chapter, that God com-

[a] V. Seld. de Jure Nat. l. vi. c. 12. [tom. i. col. 659.]

[b] Lib. iv. de Civ. Dei, cap. 6. [tom. vii. col. 92 D.]

[c] In Ancoratu. [§ 116. tom. ii. p. 118 A.]

manded *two silver trumpets* to be made, which served for two uses; *for the calling together of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps,* as the words are, ver. 2. When they did merely blow with them, that is, with a long, continued, equal breath, then they were to understand that the assembly was summoned to meet together. In which there was this difference, that if they heard them both blow, then all the congregation was to assemble; if one only, then the heads or captains alone of the thousands of Israel were to gather themselves to Moses at the door of the tabernacle, as you read, ver. 3, 4. If they did not merely blow, but *blow an alarm,* that is, with a short, concise, and interrupted breath, not continuing the sound, but often breaking it, then it was for the journeying of the camps, as you read ver. 5, 6.

So here was a civil and a military use of them; besides which, there was also a religious. Which was twofold likewise; either to give notice of a fast, or to give notice of a feast; to call them together to pray and humble themselves before God, or to excite them to rejoice in his praise, and giving him thanks.

Of their sounding for a fast you read Joel ii. 15. *Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the people, &c.* And in the like terms the psalmist proclaims a festival: *Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day; for this was a statute for Israel, &c.*[d] The like you read Psalm xcviii. 6. And thus my text and the following words are to be understood, if we will follow the interpretation of the best of the Hebrews, who vouch it to be the true sense of the eldest times. For if blowing the trumpets here were not for a religious purpose, how could the effect of it be God's remembering them, so as to save them from their enemies? Could the bare sounding with them procure such a blessing? Without doubt there was something more in it, to which God makes such a gracious promise. And therefore though Moses speaks here of blowing an alarm, (because it concerned the soldiery,) yet the Hebrews understand thereby the calling all together unto a fast, that they might humble themselves before God, and

[d] Psalm lxxxi. 3.

seek his face (i. e. his favour) when they were forced to betake themselves to their arms; and appeal to heaven for the deciding, by this means, the controversy between them and their enemies.

And then in the beginning of the next verse, when he adds, *In the day of your gladness* ye shall blow with the trumpets, some of them understand that clause of their thanksgiving to God for victory over their enemies. Which was as reasonable as their sounding upon their other *solemn days*, and in the *beginning of their months*, and over their *burnt-offerings*, and over the *sacrifices of their peace-offerings;* which are there likewise mentioned. As they were to *blow with the trumpets*, proclaim a fast, that is, when they went to war, so they were to blow with them again when the war was happily ended, that is, proclaim their thankfulness to God for giving them such success as they desired.

This exposition I shall follow, which makes these words, you see, an injunction to the Israelites for solemn fasting, before they took in hand so weighty an affair as making war upon their enemies. For which end we are now here assembled; and I pray God we may perform this duty according to the full intent and meaning of this injunction. For then we may hope God will remember us in the day of battle, and crown our arms with such success against our injurious neighbours, as he promised to the Israelites against their enemies.

Now by solemn fasting, you all know, is meant the setting some day apart for this purpose; which was always of two sorts. One private, which pious people enjoined themselves of their own accord, with respect either to their own particular, or to the common concerns; of both which we have examples in Scripture[e]. The other was public, enjoined by the supreme authority: and those either stated and ordinary, at certain times of the year, (of which we find only one enjoined by God, in Levit. xvi., but four more enjoined by the elders during their captivity in Babylon, Zech. viii. 19,) or extraordinary and unfixed, in time of some imminent danger or great distress: of which we have many examples, not only in Scripture, but also in ecclesiastical story[f].

[e] 2 Sam. xii. 16; Dan. ix. 3. Ezra viii. Tertul. de Jejunio. [cap. 2. p. 544 C.]

[f] Judges xx. 26; 2 Chron. xx. 3;

Of such a public fast, and of this latter sort, my text speaks. For the blowing with the trumpets signified the calling all the people together, as appears by the place before named in the prophet Joel v. 16, *Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those that suck the breasts, &c.* All were to appear before God, to implore his compassion by their cries and tears. I say before God, because they were to be gathered together at the tabernacle while it was standing, and afterwards at the temple. Which is the reason of that expression, *Proclaim a fast before the Lord to all the people of Jerusalem*[h]*:* that is, at the temple, where his majesty dwelt, and where they came together for religious worship. And accordingly he bids Baruch, ver. 6, to *go and read the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day.* After which example we are all here now assembled before the Lord in the place of his worship and service. And that we may understand what our business is, I shall as briefly as I can show you, first, what the Scripture means by *fasting before the Lord;* and consequently what will obtain his blessing upon our forces: secondly, how fit and necessary it is, at such a time as this, to employ ourselves in this holy duty.

I. Now the word *fasting*, in its ordinary signification, imports no more than abstinence from all sorts of food for such a time as was appointed to that purpose. But being designed for a religious end, they used it, no doubt, as a token and a sort of confession, that they were not worthy of the common supports and comforts of life, not so much as a bit of bread, and consequently not worthy to live. They intended also thereby to *afflict their soul*, as the Scripture speaks, to put themselves, if not to trouble and pain, yet into a state of sadness and mourning; as a just chastisement for their sinful pleasures. For which reason the Jews understand by solemn fasting a great deal more than it literally expresses; viz. not only abstinence from all manner of refreshment, by so much as washing their faces, or any thing of that nature; but *putting on sackcloth* next their skin, (on some great occasions especially,) *lying in ashes, rending their garments*, and such like acts of humiliation.

[h] Jer. xxxvi. 9.

But we shall be very much mistaken, if we think this was the whole business of a fasting day, to deny themselves the comforts and refreshments of nature. There was something more, and more excellent in it, and that which was properly the worship of God; which mere abstinence from food is not. And therefore,

II. The intention of such a day was, to make solemn addresses to the Almighty by prayer and supplication, which is frequently joined with fasting, and when any blessing was obtained, never separated from it. I could direct you to a multitude of places both in the Old Testament and the New, and the Apocryphal books[i] also, to this purpose; but a few may suffice. In the chapter now read for the first lesson, 2 Chron. xx. 3, you find that when news was brought to Jehoshaphat of an invasion by a great multitude of several nations, *he feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.* This was so much the business of such a day, that the prophet Jeremiah speaks as if it was the thing for which fasting was immediately designed: *When they fast I will not hear their cry*[j]. He doth not say he would not regard their fasting, but give no audience to their prayers; which, it appears by this, was a great part of the employment of such a day. And therefore when the prophet Joel had called upon them to blow the trumpet, proclaim a fast, gather all together, elders and people, great and small, (in the place beforementioned,) he subjoins these words, ver. 17, to show what it was for: *Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?* For that purpose we are now assembled on this fasting day, to put up our humble and fervent petitions unto the Divine Majesty; to cry earnestly to him for his grace and mercy, for his help and assistance; for good success of our forces by sea and land; for a blessing upon ourselves and upon this whole kingdom.

A very great work! A most weighty employment! For which we had need seriously inquire, whether we be well prepared. Are we fit to appear before the Lord of heaven and

[i] Tobit xii. 4; Judith iv. 9, 10, &c.; vi. 21. [j] Jer. xiv. 12.

earth? to be intercessors for a whole nation? to bespeak his favour in those great actions that are on foot among us and in the neighbouring world? Can such as we hope to prevail for a gracious audience of such important suits? May we not rather fear that he should hide his face from such obstinate sinners? that he *should cover himself with a cloud* (as Jeremy speaks in his Lamentations, iii. 44,) *that our prayer should not pass through?* and that he should turn away from us, when we spread before him our necessities or dangers, and implore his pity on us?

Let us inquire and make a diligent search into our hearts, whether we have not brought something along with us into his presence, which may obstruct the passage of our prayers to the throne of grace, and render them ineffectual. Which leads me to the third thing.

III. On their fasting days, every man who hoped for acceptance with God was bound to search and try his ways; to enter into the very secrets of his soul, and see what he could find there displeasing unto God, which might cry louder for vengeance than his prayers could do for mercy.

For which end their iniquities were declared and set in order before them by the prophets (if there were any) and those that instructed them. So we read that Jeremiah sent Baruch (in the place before named) *to read the words of the Lord in the people's ears on the fasting day.* And this charge is given to the prophet Isaiah, (as you will hear in the first lesson appointed at even prayer,) *Cry aloud and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins*[k]. When you have considered the chapter, you will find he speaks of the day of the great fast, (which was *a Sabbath of rest to them,* on which they were to *afflict their souls*[l],) upon which he was to imitate the trumpet which had called them together; to sound a new alarm in their ears, to rouse them from their security, to awaken them to a sight of their sins, and move their hearts to set themselves against them with all their might. And of what sins doth he admonish them? In the first place he takes notice of their vain pretences to religion. For though they sought God daily, and heard the law, and observed the ordi-

[k] Isai. lviii. 1. [l] Levit. xvi. 30, 31.

nances of divine worship, yea, *took delight in approaching to God,* (as you read ver. 2,) yet they continued in their open disobedience to the rest of his commands. For they were notoriously unjust; nay, many miserable souls proclaimed their unmerciful dealing and cruelty. They were full of strife and debate, hatred and contention; and so given over to voluptuousness, that on the very day of their fast *they found pleasure,* as well as *exacted all their labours* (ver. 3. 4.), and could not forbear to speak evil one of another, when they were all confessing their sins to God. *Their hands were defiled with blood, and their fingers with iniquity; their lips spoke lies, and their tongues uttered perverseness,* &c., as you may read in the rest of the chapter, and in that which follows.

These sins therefore the prophet proclaimed in their ears with a loud voice; and told them it was in vain to fast and pray, while these iniquities continued, and *separated between them and their God: so that he hid his face from them, and would not hear* [m]. And do not our iniquities, in like manner, *testify to our faces,* (as another prophet speaks, Hos. v. 5,) that is, are they not notorious, though we should seal up our lips, and say nothing of them? Nay, search and examine, I beseech you, whether we be not worse than they. Do we *seek the Lord daily?* Dare we affirm this of ourselves, which the prophet acknowledges they did? Do we *delight to know his ways, as a nation that doth righteousness, and forsakes not the ordinances of their God?* Can we say (as he confesses of them) *that we ask of him the ordinances of justice, and take delight in approaching unto God?* Alas, alas! these, I fear, are not become national virtues; but too many of us are like that people in Malachi's time, who said of the divine service, *What a weariness is it!* What a burden is such a day as this to us! And what great numbers, may we justly fear, are now wallowing in their sins, when they should be rather humbling themselves before God in dust and ashes!

But let us suppose better things; that we are a people who do not *forsake the ordinances of their God:* yet can we say that our religion hath made a general reformation of our lives? How often have we approached unto God, and become no liker to him? How many fasts have we observed, and forsaken no

[m] Isai. lix. 2.

one sin? Are we not still as unjust and uncharitable as those that know not God? Or are we not lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? Oh, this love of pleasure, how easily doth it bewitch men's hearts and draw them from their duty! Idleness and sports are apt to swallow up the most of their time, besides the gluttony and drunkenness, the filthiness and uncleanness, that are wont to attend upon a negligent and careless life: the quarrels also and contentions; nay, the bloodshed and murders, which they many times commit, when they are crossed in their sinful pleasures, or contradicted in their drunken humours. And what shall I say of the oaths and blasphemies wherewith such men's mouths are too often filled? And there is still a worse thing behind, which is *putting forth of the finger, and speaking of vanity*, mentioned by the prophet, ver. 9, which seems to denote that there were scoffers and open mockers among them; whose insolent boldness, when it proceeds to derision of religion, jeering at holy things, and playing even with the word of God itself, it is the height of impiety, the filling up of a people's iniquity.

There is no prophet now among us, who can confidently charge these crimes upon this nation, or tell us how far it is guilty of them; but if they abound every where, they will certainly render our sacrifices unacceptable unto God. And therefore let every one descend into his own breast, and make a strict inquisition there into the state of his own soul: and when he is acquainted with it,

IV. The next thing in a fast to the Lord is ingenuously to confess, and sorrowfully bewail in the bitterness of our souls those sins of which we find ourselves guilty. An example of which you meet withal in the days of Samuel, who, in a great distress, gathered all Israel to Mizpeh, where they *drew water and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord.* But I cannot stand to open that place, and many more in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, which relate to this matter; because there is something further and more considerable which requires my care to explain and press upon your hearts.

V. And that is, a sincere purpose of forsaking our sins, and reforming our lives according to God's holy word; which must accompany all the foregoing acts of religion to make them ef-

fectual. For to what end do we examine ourselves, unless it be to correct and amend whatsoever we find to be amiss? It is an unprofitable labour to confess and bewail what is past, unless it move us to do better for the time to come. Nay, to pray to God for mercy while we continue to provoke him to anger by our transgressions, is a perfect contradiction; and accounted by him no better than a piece of gross hypocrisy, which the psalmist calls *flattering him with our mouth;* pretending that fear and reverence of him which is not truly settled in our heart. Therefore see what he replies to this people when they cried to him saying, *Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not. Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet; therefore the Lord doth not accept them, he will now remember their iniquities, and visit their sins. Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good: when they fast I will not hear their cry, and when they offer burnt offerings and an oblation, I will not accept them, &c.*[o]

When there was no true repentance and resolution to turn from their evil ways, you see the prayers of the prophet himself were of as little avail for their safety as their own prayers and sacrifices which they offered to him. And more than this, he expected their holy purposes should be performed, and that they should not content themselves with good resolutions, which many times are as soon broken as they are made. When the people therefore in their distress *lamented after the Lord*, the good man tells them[p], *If you do return to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the strange gods, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, to serve him only: and he will deliver you.* That is, Let us see the proof of your unfeigned sorrow for what you have done amiss: let your fair promises and good purposes bring forth fruit meet for repentance: and accordingly you read, verse 4, that *the children of Israel put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only:* i. e. they did according to their resolutions.

But one place may serve instead of a great many, Ezek. xxxiii. 3, 6, where the watchman is commanded to *blow the trumpet, and warn the people when he saw the sword coming.* What

[o] Jer. xiv. 9, 10, 11, 12. [p] 1 Sam. vii. 2, 3.

was this but to call them to fasting and humiliation, to repentance and forsaking their sins? So you find it explained, verse 7, 8, (as you may read at your leisure,) and observe how the prophet is directed to treat with them in these terms, verse 11, *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* This conversion from their evil ways was the only means to save them; to which therefore the prophet most earnestly importunes them.

And thus Maimonides, a most learned writer among the Jews, describes one of their fasting-days in his treatise upon this subject[q]. "An elder," saith he, "is appointed, who stands and calls upon the people to turn unto the Lord, speaking to this purpose: O my brethren, it is neither your fasting, nor your sackcloth, nor your ashes, which will be able to turn away the anger of God from you; but your repentance and good works must ensue to do the business. Do you not find it so in the case of Nineveh? How do you read in their story? Look in the book of Jonah and observe how they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least, iii. 5. And the king caused it to be proclaimed throughout the city, saying, *Let neither man nor beast taste any food; let them be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands*, verse 7, 8. And what the effect was you may find, verse 10, *God saw their works, and that they returned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil*, &c. Observe, brethren, he doth not say that he saw their sackcloth, and took notice of their fasting, but that *he saw their works, and that they returned from their evil ways.* And so God speaks by the prophet Joel, *Turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious: who knows if he will return and leave a blessing behind him?*"

Thus, saith Maimonides, the elder was required to speak with all his might, that he might humble their hearts and turn them

[q] In Taanioth, cap. 4. [De Jejun. Hebr. &c. interpr. J. B. Carpzov. 4to, Lips. 1662.]

with a perfect repentance. And after they had thus spent the day in prayer, hearing the word of God, and other duties, (which I shall mention in the next particular,) all the people, he says, were wont to go into the burying place, and there they wept and prayed again. And one spake to them in this manner; "Behold, ye shall all die and perish like those whose graves here lie before you, unless you be converted from your evil ways." Which is muchwhat such a saying as that of our blessed Saviour's in the Gospel for this day[r]: *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

You see then what is the great work of this day: wherein no exhortation is more proper than that of Jeremiah to this people in his Lamentations, iii. 40, *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.* Do not presume of mercy without this, though you should perform all the other. But fear rather lest that should be verified in us which was said to the Jews, *When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear you*[s]. A very lamentable case! to lose the favour of God, and all this labour likewise to obtain it. What should they do then? What course would God have them take? He informs them in the very next words, *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord,* (now I am willing to be reconciled:) *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, &c.*

From which words I am directed to another necessary part of a solemn fast, which is the last I shall mention.

VI. And that is, doing public justice upon notorious offenders by inflicting those punishments upon vice and wickedness which the law requires. *Judge the fatherless:* the prophet speaks to the rulers and governors of the people, that they should see right done and abuses corrected. And accordingly you find that upon the days of their humiliation this was a considerable part of their care. For when Samuel gathered all the people to Mizpeh where they kept a fast (as I showed before) and confessed their sins, &c., the day concluded with this: *And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh*[t]. When Ezra, in like

[r] Luke xiii. 3, 5. [s] Isaiah i. 15. [t] 1 Sam. vii. 6.

manner, *mourned, and did neither eat bread nor drink water*, he summoned all the people to come to Jerusalem, upon pain of forfeiting all their goods if they did not; and when they appeared, he examined who had taken strange wives contrary to the law, and he caused them to be put away, as you read, Ezra x. 6, 7, &c.

And thus Maimonides tells us in aftertimes their manner was[u], upon their fasting days occasioned by any public trouble, for the house of judgment (as their phrase is) "to sit in the synagogue of every city, and there examine the lives of the citizens after morning prayer until noon: and so they removed, saith he, the stumblingblocks of transgression. They inquired, for instance, after the men of violence, those who had been extortioners and oppressors of others, whom they excommunicated: they sought after the scorners and those that despised the law, whom they humbled with all the like offenders. And then, from the middle of the day till three o'clock, they recited the blessings and curses that are in the law, according to what the wise man says, *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord*[x]. And then having read such reproofs out of the prophets as were most suitable to the present strait wherein they were, evening prayer began, in which they spent the remaining part of the day crying unto God with all their might.

This certainly very much concerns all the magistrates and officers of justice among us in this kingdom, who should blush to be found more remiss than those who lived under a lower discipline. I wish I could lift up my voice and speak so loud as to awaken every one of them to chastise all public offenders, to do justice strictly upon those who dishonour God, and are a scandal to religion. Stir up yourselves and be zealous for your God (as the Scripture speaks). Let not the drunkards, the blasphemers, the profaners of the Lord's day, who despise his worship and service, go unpunished. See good order kept in all houses of public entertainment. Find out and suppress all places of noted uncleanness; make a strict inquisition after false weights and deceitful measures; discountenance makebates and sowers of discord among brethren; and execute the severity of the law against all open wickedness.

This would be indeed to keep a *fast unto the Lord*. This

[u] Ib. cap. 1. [x] Prov. iii. 11.

would be the ready way to make us a happy people. For though there might still be a great many sins committed among us, yet they would not be national sins, nor be imputed to us as the guilt of the kingdom; but every man should bear his own iniquity. Whereas without such reformation as this, or a hearty and honest endeavour after it, our fastings and prayers and lamentations will serve only for marks of our insincerity, and of the mean opinion we have of God: as if he could be could be moved with such services; wherein we have respect only to ourselves, and not at all to him: who is not honoured while profane wickedness openly appears, to the high affront of piety and religion, without check or controlment.

This bold commission of sin without correction he will account the sin of the kingdom: and it will lie more especially at the door of the magistrates and officers of justice, if they can, and yet will not, redress such impieties. For it was always an acknowledged rule, that he who doth not forbid sin when it is in his power, doth in effect command it; and he that doth not punish it when it is in his power, encourages and upholds it.

As we expect then the blessing of Heaven upon us; as we wish the happiness of these kingdoms, and desire that the great designs which are now on foot may thrive and prosper; let us every one, in our several conditions, relations, and places, set ourselves seriously against vice and wickedness, and labour to root it out. For not only our eternal, but our temporal interest is concerned in this, as I shall now endeavour briefly to demonstrate, by showing how rational and necessary it is to perform this duty of which I have been treating, in the full extent thereof.

That, you may remember, was the second thing which I undertook to do when I entered upon this part of my text. And I shall not press you by general reasons, but such only as particularly relate to those who are in a state of war: who ought to consider, in the first place,

I. That as fasting and prayer are an open acknowledgment that God is the sovereign Disposer of all events, so it is never more necessary to make this acknowledgment than in a time of war, when his overruling power and wisdom is more eminently apparent. For it hath been frequently seen that a little chance, as we call it, hath disordered mighty armies: a small accident

hath turned the fortune of the day. The mistaking of a word in fights at land, the shifting of the wind in fights at sea, or some such like single event, hath sometimes ravished victory from those who had it just in their hands. There are innumerable instances in story of such sudden contingencies as have utterly defeated the fairest hopes. We have one in the first lesson for this day's Morning Prayer; where we read how three nations that were combined against Jehoshaphat, by a mistake of a party of them who were laid in ambush, fell upon one another, and were utterly destroyed by their own hands, 2 Chron. xx. 22, 23. Which is to be ascribed to the secret interposition of the Divine power, which governs all things both great and small, and by very little things produces very great alterations.

The skill and prudence of those that command in battles may do much; the courage of the soldiers is of great moment; the strength and number of ships is very considerable. But (as one of the heathens speaks) one single chance, that is, (in the Christian language,) one turn of the Divine providence, can do more than them all.

Thus far then, blessed be God, we are in the right: the very appointment of such an assembly as this being a public acknowledgment which their majesties make that there is a Mind, (to use the words of Plato[y],) an eternal Mind, which is the King of heaven and earth, governing and ordering all things every where; and our meeting together at this time being a solemn recognition of that supreme authority and providence of his. Whereby we declare our sense of human weakness, though never so well armed and bravely appointed; and, disclaiming all confidence in the arm of flesh, testify to the world that we hope not for salvation from thence; but from the living God, whose favour is at all times to be most humbly implored; but then especially, when not only men, but the wind and the seas, storms and tempests, nay, all other things may rise up against us. And we ought further to consider that,

II. Our fasting and prayers being an acknowledgment likewise of the obedience we owe to Almighty God in all things, there can be nothing of more dangerous consequence than to persist in our rebellion against him, after we have made such open confessions of his supremacy, and of our dependence on

[y] Ὡς νοῦς ἐστι βασιλεὺς οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς. [Plat. Phileb. p. 28 C.]

him, and the need in which we stand of his favour and help. Upon which account we ought to take care that these religious addresses to him be attended with such a reformation as I have now mentioned, before we venture to engage with our enemies; that so we may have no more enemies than they to oppose us; but we may be in peace with Heaven when men make war upon us. For he is in a bad condition who hath a great many enemies to deal with all at one time: and he in a worse who carries a secret enemy along with him in his armies; as all those do who go in their sins to fight with their opposers. And thence it follows, that none are in so dangerous a condition as those who have God for their enemy; who threatens to *wound the head of his enemies, of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses*[z]. But never are they in more danger than when by their prayer and fasting the devil is not cast out, but they still resolutely persist in their disobedience.

Before we blow the trumpet then of war against our enemies, we ought in all reason to proclaim war against our sins. It is our highest interest to call up all the forces of our souls (if I may so speak) to encounter these, and tread them down under our feet, before we have the confidence to look our other foes, who are not so deadly, in the face. There is a peculiar precept of God by Moses belonging to this matter, which ought to be often pondered: *When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing*[a].

III. By which means we shall be disposed to manage all other wars after a Christian manner. We shall not commit any injustice or violence when we go to redress it; nor exercise cruelty when we take in hand to punish it. We shall never be guilty of that of which we complain, but fight like those that hate fighting. We shall love even our bitterest enemies; and wish we could conquer them by that weapon rather than any other. But if that cannot be, we shall be able however, which is the next thing considerable,

IV. To place a good hope in God that he will take our part, and send us auxiliaries from heaven when men rise up against us. *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, &c.* (as the wise man observes,) *but time and chance happeneth to them all*[b]. It is God only, as you have heard, that can

[z] Psalm lxviii. 21. [a] Deut. xxiii. 9. [b] Eccles. ix. 11.

make opportunities favourable to us, and cause things to fall out advantageously on our side; yea, make little means bring mighty things to pass: and we may hope he will do so, when *in all our ways we acknowledge him*, and live as becomes those who believe that, let us devise what we please, it is the Lord who directs and orders the success[c].

V. And then to him we shall not fail to give all the praise, and ascribe nothing to ourselves: as that admirable prince David doth; who after all his wonderful achievements makes the most humble acknowledgments to God, in the last of those Psalms now read: *Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: my goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield*, (observe how many words he uses to express his sense that he owed all to God,) *and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me. Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him? Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away*[d]. As if he had said, "Lord, what am I? what is the best or greatest of men, that such things should be effected by them, as the subduing so many people as have submitted unto me? Alas! we are but vanity; a mere shadow: and what can a whole army of shadows do without the power of God? Unto which I must and do ascribe entirely all the victories which have been won over great and strong nations by such a feeble creature as I am." And thus Jonathan, a friend of David's, speaks to his armourbearer; *Let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be the Lord will work by us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few*[e].

VI. With him therefore if we can make friendship by abandoning all his enemies, it is visible that this good hope in God will inspire us with true valour, and make us fear nothing inordinately; no, not death itself. *The righteous*, says Solomon, *are as bold as a lion*[f]; they can look dangers undauntedly in the face. Whereas all the natural courage and boldness which abundance of natural spirits, in a vigorous constitution of body and health, may indue some men withal, will grow faint,

[c] Prov. xvi. 9; xx. 24. [d] Psalm cxliv. 1, 2, &c. [e] 1 Sam. xiv. 6. [f] Prov. xxviii. 1.

and languish, whensoever the terrors of an evil conscience seize upon them, and their guilt starts up and stares them in the face. If a wicked man chance to reflect upon this one thing alone, that he is issued forth into the field of danger without God, (more confident in his own strength than in the power of the Almighty, whom he doth not seriously acknowledge, nor study to engage,) it will amaze his spirit, and quench his courage. This will daunt him more than all the enemies in the world: and strike a greater terror into him than the noise of cannon and the shrieks and groans of dying men. And what man on earth is there so resolute and confident, so high spirited and a despiser of danger, as to be able to secure himself from these invisible strokes of heaven? which will trouble and confound him, and baffle him in all his enterprises. It is necessary then, to make a man a thoroughly good soldier, that he have first conquered himself. He that would fear nothing must in the first place fear God. Unto which, if we would all apply ourselves with due seriousness, we should have reason to expect that *God would remember us*, (as my text speaks,) that is, own us for his friends, and *save us from our enemies*. Which he can do, either by overcoming them, or by overcoming their enmity, and making them friends; which is the best way of all. For *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*[g].

III.

This is the last part of my text; of which let me beg your patience while I give a short account.

It is possible indeed that success may wait upon the wicked: but as they cannot reasonably hope for it, so they will be in fear and dread, whensoever they reflect upon their wickedness, that at last they shall miscarry. Whereas truly good men can never fail to have a good hope in God; that whatsoever success they meet withal at present, he will not abandon them utterly: but turn even crosses to their future advantage. And who so happy as he that lives not in suspense and doubt about the final issue of things? but can commit himself to God, and to his wise providence with an assured confidence that it shall go

[g] Prov. xvi. 7.

well with him at the last; though his faith and patience be exercised a while with dubious, or with adverse events.

It is the observation of Isocrates[i] in several places of his orations, (and he lived almost to an hundred years of age, and so could the better take notice of the carriage of things in his own country,) that the conclusion of all the wars in Greece were not according to the strength of their forces, but also according to the justice of their cause. For though there were different successes in the intermediate acts, which made some men doubt which side was in the right, yet the catastrophe, (as they speak,) the conclusion of those tragical commotions, declared the righteous cause victorious; and they who were unjustly oppressed were vindicated into their ancient liberties.

But however that be, there is no greater truth than what was said by Cassius[k], Μεγίστη ἐλπὶς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἐστὶ τὸ δίκαιον, 'Nothing gives a man such hope in war as to have right on his side.' "God and my right," is the best inscription that ever was in any escutcheon, and the greatest support of a Christian prince.

But of all the stories you ever read or heard of, there is none like that which reports the confidence and assured hope of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, in the first lesson this day, which I have often mentioned. Where, after he had proclaimed a fast, and made a most admirable prayer to God, (in which he briefly sets forth these two things, his trust in God, and the justice of his cause,) he was so mightily encouraged, that he ordained the people to go singing, when they went to fight with their numerous enemies. A marvellous confidence in God's power and goodness, which inspired them with such hope of success, that they sung their ἐπινίκιον, or song of triumph, beforehand, as you read 2 Chron. xx. 21: *When he had consulted the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord, that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, saying, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever.* They had a prophet indeed, who came and assured them of victory, but they who had none have done the same, and it is probable

[i] In Archidamo. Καὶ τοὺς πολέμους τοὺς προγεγενημένους οὐ κατὰ τὰς δυνάμεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τὸ δίκαιον τέλος ἅπαντας εἰληφότας·— [Orat. vi. p. 162.]

[k] Apud Appian. [De Bell. Civil. lib. iv. cap. 97.]

from this example. For Cedrenus tells us, that the ancient Christians used to sing in their battles, as if they would praise God for assured success before the victory was obtained.

This was the issue of a pious fast in those old times; and we might see the same again, did we not merely forsake our food on this day, but likewise our sins. If we would not only humble ourselves before God to-day, but alway walk humbly with him, I might with some confidence use the words of the prophet in that place, ver. 17, and say, *Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord; fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord will be with you.* He will certainly *remember us*, and we shall be saved from the hands of all that hate us.

Not so speedily perhaps as we may desire, but as soon as we are fit for the mercies he intends to bestow upon us; and with such speed as is consistent with the wonted methods of his most wise proceedings. We expected, I remember, to have seen Ireland reduced that year his majesty went over thither; and thought it very hard that after so much expense we did not see our enemies elsewhere humbled the last year. But were we a much better people than I can suppose we are, God might justly defer the accomplishment of such hopes, and yet be as good as his word here in my text and in other places.

First, that he may keep us in a continued dependence upon him, and quicken us to *pray with all prayer, watching thereunto with perseverance*, and patiently waiting till he have mercy upon us.

Secondly, that he may work in us a thorough repentance; which, alas! is very imperfect, and therefore so is our deliverance. Let us complete the one, and God will finish the other. But while our repentance remains so defective, it is rather a wonder that God hath done so much, than that he hath done no more for us. Particularly,

Thirdly, God may justly defer to do all that I hope he intends, till we become more sensible of what he hath done already. He wrought a mighty deliverance for us not long ago; when we were not able to deliver ourselves, nor deserved to be delivered by him. But so it is, that our angry fits of discontent, because we were not delivered in our own method, and after our way, have made us not to take sufficient notice of the deliverance itself; and of that mighty hand of God which (as

we sing in our daily hymn, which I wish we would mind) *hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.* It is hard to find a greater instance of this any where than here in this nation: where men that had proudly projected the alteration of the whole frame of our government, and of our religion, and in their own opinion had laid their design so strongly that they thought it could not be defeated, were scattered and dispersed in a moment; and all their towering imaginations confounded and brought to nought. This was certainly the Lord's doing, which ought to have been marvellous in all our eyes. And when it is, then he will still *work wonderful things for us in righteousness*, as the prophet speaks: and crown our deliverance with a conclusion suitable to its beginning. Besides all this,

Lastly, we must consider that God is not wont to pour out his indignation all at once, even upon those whom he intends to destroy; but consumes them by degrees. Whence that remarkable phrase very frequent in the prophets, who are said to *drop* when they were sent to denounce God's judgments against a people: *Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop toward the holy places*[l]. So it is in the Hebrew, which (to make out the sense) we translate *drop thy word,* and prophesy against the land of Israel. The like you read Micah ii. 6, where the people said, *Prophesy not to them that prophesy:* in the Hebrew (as the margin of the Bibles tells you) it is, *Drop ye not*, &c. Thus Amos speaks also, *Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not against the house of Isaac*[m]. Upon which words St. Hierom[n] hath this pertinent observation, "This is the idiom of the Scripture, *quod non totam Dei simul inferant iram*, &c., because the prophets do not denounce the whole anger of God at once, but threaten it by little drops."

So patient is the goodness of God, that he doth not presently suffer *his whole displeasure to arise*, but punishes those by little and little whom he intends to ruin: that they may have time to repent and save their souls, though they shall by no means save their temporal estate. Thus he dealt with all the proud tyrants of old; with those, for instance, of Nineveh and

[l] Ezek. xxi. 2. [m] Amos vii. 16. [n] [Opp. tom. vi. col. 334 E.]

Babylon. And it may give us some account of the method wherein it is likely he will proceed against the grand oppressors of this age; particularly him in these western parts of the world. Whose humiliation (which so many nations groan for) is not to be expected, perhaps, by a sudden pouring of the vials of God's wrath upon him all at once; but drop by drop, as the prophets speak: till the time come that the sins of that insolent nation be ripe; and then God no longer proceeds in this leisurely method, but is wont to pour out his indignation in larger measures to a speedy destruction.

If you please, for a conclusion, look into the prophecy of Nahum; where you will find all this declared more fully, and admirably expressed. He was sent to denounce utter destruction to the Ninevites, who had abused the patience and goodness of God in the days of Jonah, by returning to those wicked works which for a time they reformed upon his preaching. Therefore this prophet tells them from the Lord, i. 9, *He will make an utter end, affliction shall not rise up a second time.* That is, one blow should strike them down, and there should be no need of a second to perfect their overthrow.

But hitherto it had been much otherwise, as you may see in the beginning of that prophecy: which is very remarkable for the account it gives of the way of the Divine providence, in the description he makes of the Divine nature, ver. 2, *God is jealous*, that is, he cannot alway endure to behold his friends oppressed and his enemies triumph, but will in due time take vengeance: as he three times repeats it, in the words immediately following, to show the certainty of it. *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth, and is furious*, (that is, can do it suddenly and easily when he pleases;) *the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries: and he reserveth wrath* (till the time proper for it) *for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger*, i. e. to execute his displeasure; *and great in power*, to do it when he thinks good; *and will not acquit the wicked*; i. e. not suffer them to escape, though he long forbear them. And when he doth come to execute his anger, it is in a terrible manner; after there hath been long forbearance. So it follows, *The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, &c.: the mountains quake at him, and the rocks are thrown down by him, &c.: with an*

overflowing flood will he make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

The prophet, that is, could not tell how to represent the dreadful vengeance God took of those who had tired his long-suffering goodness, better than by storms and hurricanes, deluges and inundations; which sweep all before them with such an irresistible violence as is impossible to be opposed. So he concludes in the very next words, *What do ye imagine against the Lord?* to hinder, that is, the execution of his wrath, and to escape his vengeance. Alas! all your contrivances to avoid the stroke will prove vain imaginations, foolish devices, when he designs to ruin you. So it follows in the next words, which I read at first, *He will make an utter end, and affliction shall not rise up a second time.* Which he repeats again, ver. 12, *Though I have afflicted thee,* (by various sorts of punishments,) *I will afflict thee no more:* but this once, that is, for it shall be a concluding stroke that shall utterly confound thee.

Thus the Lord did with that great king, (as he would needs be called,) the king of Assyria. And thus we may rationally expect he will treat all other haughty tyrants; who assume to themselves the name of great, only because they are so strong as to be able to crush their weaker neighbours. For it still remains true what the next prophet saith concerning the Chaldeans, who succeeded the Assyrian tyrants, *The Lord is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity*[n]; that is, he cannot approve of the violence and cruelty of such oppressors, *who deal treacherously,* (as it there follows,) *and devour the men that are more righteous than themselves.* For how bad soever the Israelites were in those times, the Chaldeans were much worse. And I hope I may say the same of this sinful nation with respect to our injurious neighbours; *unto whom the cup of the Lord's right hand shall* (at last) *be turned, and shameful spewing shall be upon their glory*[o].

Then let them set their cunning wits on work to imagine and devise all the means they can invent to save themselves from drinking of that cup, they shall not be able to turn it away; but be so intoxicated with it, that they shall reel and stagger, and stumble at noonday, being unable to see the things

[n] Habbak. i. 13. [o] Habbak. ii. 16.

that belong to their peace. Then shall all the fine politics of that subtle nation quite fail them. They shall not be able to serve themselves by any of their wonted artifices and illusions; but only expose themselves the more to shame and disgrace, by trusting to such falsehoods and impostures as those whereby they have long amused and deceived many of their neighbours. *For there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord*[p].

All whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase[q].

For he loveth righteousness: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth[r].

And will preserve the faithful, and plentifully reward the proud doer[s].

In which humble confidence let me conclude as he there doth, ver. 24, *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.*

To that great Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be glory, and power, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

[p] Prov. xxi. 30. [q] Dan. iv. ult. [r] Psalm xi. 5, 8. [s] Psalm xxxi. 23.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

AND COURT OF ALDERMEN,

AT ST. BRIDGET'S CHURCH,

ON EASTER-MONDAY, 1696.

HOUBLON, Mayor,

Cur' Special' tent' apud Domum Mansion' Owen Buckingham, Mil' un' Vic' die Mercur' xv. die Aprilis in Hebdomada Paschæ, 1696. *Annoque Regis Willielmi tertii, Angliæ, &c. octavo.*

This Court doth desire the Right Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Ely, to print his Sermon preached on Monday last at the Parish-Church of St. Bride's, before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Governors of the several Hospitals of this City.

GOODFELLOW.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR, &c.

2 Timothy ii. 8.

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.

THESE words are a solemn charge of St. Paul's to his son Timothy; whom he had earnestly exhorted in the foregoing part of this chapter to take care of three things.

First, to continue constant in the grace which he had received from our Lord, i. e. in the doctrine of Christianity, ver. 1, *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

Secondly, to deliver this doctrine to other faithful persons, who might spread and publish it there where he could not preach it himself, ver. 2, *And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* And

Lastly, not to be moved by any troubles or difficulties that might come in his way to neglect his duty, or be less zealous in it; but in his Christian warfare *to endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*[a].

This he illustrates and urges by three most apt resemblances, in the three following verses, 4, 5, 6. Which show that it was highly reasonable he should be no less diligent in his business than soldiers, and wrestlers, and husbandmen are in theirs. Who do not expect to carry away the spoil, to win the crown, (or other prize,) to reap the fruits of the earth, unless they fight and strive, (and that according to the laws of the combat,) and undergo those labours that belong to their employment.

[a] 2 Tim. ii. 3.

These things he bids him consider and lay to heart, ver. 7, beseeching God *to give him a right understanding in all things.*

Now that he might never fail to do according to these directions, he gives him the charge which I have now read, to *remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David* (i. e. the true Messiah) *was raised from the dead,* according to the gospel which he had heard him preach. This if Timothy preached constantly to himself as well as others, the apostle knew that he would find it more powerful to animate and encourage him in the Christian service, and to make him unwearied and undaunted therein, than any other consideration in the world could be.

So the words, you see, do not lead me to prove the resurrection of Christ from the dead, (for which I must refer you to the gospel which he preached, where you will find the belief of it grounded upon the most undoubted testimonies,) but to show you what necessity there is to remember this, and inculcate it upon yourselves and others; that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to what we read in the Gospel.

Why should the apostle, may some say, command this to be remembered above all other things? Was there not as much cause to remember the cross of Christ? to reflect continually upon his death and passion, his bitter agonies and bloody sweat, his cruel torments, and all the vile circumstances of his sufferings?

Yes, no doubt, there was and is great reason to remember both. But yet you may note, that when the apostles were to choose a person to succeed in the place of the traitor Judas, it was not that he might be a witness of Christ's passion, but of his resurrection[b]. This was the great business of the apostleship, and the great work also of the Holy Ghost, which presently came down to join his testimony with theirs, as you read Acts v. 32, *We are witnesses of these things* (speaking of Christ's resurrection); *and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* That therefore which they were peculiarly sent to testify, with the conjunct testimony of the Holy Ghost, was above all things to be heartily believed,

[b] Acts i. 21.

and faithfully remembered, and solemnly commemorated: as it is at this festival upon more days than one: which our ancestors with great reason have appointed for this purpose.

For this (to give a general reason of it) was the only thing whereof there was any doubt, there being no question at all that our Saviour suffered, and was exposed to public shame. All his enemies saw him hang upon his cross, and were as ready as any other persons in the world to proclaim and publish every where that he was accused, condemned, and punished as a notorious malefactor. Nay, they rejoiced in hope, that they were rid of one, who, if he had still lived, was like to draw all men after him. They not only confessed, but gloried that he was buried and shut up in his grave; where they thought to keep him so fast, that he should never stir to trouble them any more. But that he suffered unjustly, and was wrongfully sentenced and put to death, this they denied and resolutely gainsaid: and therefore would by no means grant that he was risen out of his tomb; which they saw plainly would be to reverse the judgment they had passed upon him, and to judge and condemn themselves as murderers and crucifiers of the Lord of life.

This therefore being the great controversy, it was absolutely necessary that the apostles should constantly assert and evidently prove the resurrection of Christ above all other things, if they meant to gain any disciples to the crucified Christ. And when they had gained them, this was to be kept in mind, and carefully preserved, if they intended to have them *abide in him*, (as St. John speaks,) that is, persist in the belief and practice of his religion. As I shall now proceed to show, by laying before you how much depends upon the resurrection; even all the faith and hope and comfort of a Christian. For,

I. First, the resurrection of Christ from the dead was the strongest proof of the most fundamental point in our religion.

II. Secondly, it removed the greatest scandal that lay in the way to the belief of that fundamental point.

III. Thirdly, it gave all Christians full satisfaction, that God was abundantly satisfied with what our Saviour Christ had done and suffered.

IV. Fourthly, it verified the whole Gospel, which relies upon this as the undeniable evidence of it.

V. Fifthly, more particularly it proved the certainty of future rewards in the other world. And therefore,

VI. Sixthly, was the most powerful encouragement to patient continuance in well-doing; without which we cannot hope for those rewards.

This is the sum of what follows.

I.

First, the resurrection of Christ was the strongest proof of the most fundamental doctrine in our religion, viz. that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Which he demonstrated indeed in his lifetime by many miraculous works, which were the divine testimony to him that he was what he said, the Son of God. And this in the highest sense of those words, not only sent to act in God's name, and by his authority, but begotten of him before all worlds, being of one substance with the Father: as the whole current of the Gospel teaches us, and as the Jews themselves seemed to understand him, when they accused him for saying, *God was his Father, making himself equal with God*[c]. And this was said upon occasion of such a miraculous work as none but God could effect.

But some were so malicious as to say such things were done by the power of the devil. And others, who were better minded, were still incredulous, and asked for a further evidence, saying, *What sign showest thou, seeing thou dost these things?* That is, took upon him to drive out those that bought and sold in the temple, which he calls his Father's house. To which he answered in the second of St. John's Gospel, ver. 19, *Destroy this temple*, (speaking of his own body in which the divinity really dwelt,) *and in three days I will raise it up again.* Here he plainly fore-assigns his resurrection from the dead by his own power, as the greatest evidence that he was what he pretended, the Son of God, in whose human nature the divine really inhabited. For these words were as if he had said, I have given you signs and wrought wonders already, which if they will not convince you, then you must stay till my resurrection, which will undeniably prove that which you question; it being impossible I should raise my body from the dead, if I were not really the Son of God.

[c] John v. 18.

And thus we read also in St. Matthew, that another company upon another occasion asked him the same question more than once, and his answer was, *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign* (i. e. after so many signs had been already given, it was a token of a depraved disposition to call for more); *there shall none be given to them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas*[d]. This was all that remained for the conviction of obstinate people; such a wonderful thing as the deliverance of Jonas out of the whale's belly, after he had been there buried three days: or rather a far greater wonder, the resurrection of Christ, after he had been so long actually dead and buried in the earth.

This was more than all the miracles he had wrought while he was alive. Which was the reason (as Theophylact observes) why he wrought none after his resurrection, because that was the greatest, the most astonishing miracle; able by itself alone to prove that he was the Son of God. There needed no more but only the coming of the Holy Ghost to prove that he was indeed risen.

If he had come from the cross, as his crucifiers desired, it had not been such a wonder as his coming up out of his grave, after they had seen him give up the ghost upon the cross. His rising to life again struck all his enemies dead. They knew not what to say, but only that he was not risen. For if he were, then God (whose power alone could raise a dead man) had verified his word, who said he was the Son of God; and condemned theirs, who not only denied it, but pretended that in saying so he committed blasphemy against God. If that had been true, God would never have countenanced such an impious person by raising him to life again, but have been more concerned than they to confute his word; which had been very easily done, by letting him lie and rot in his grave. For he having given this sign of his being the Son of God, if it had not come to pass, all the fame he had acquired by his miracles would have died with him. And it was impossible it should come to pass if he had been a deceiver and blasphemer, because God, who alone could raise him, would never have lent any support to a lie, and to a lie whereby his Majesty was most highly affronted; much less would he have digged so deep into the earth (if I

[d] Matthew xii. 39; xvi. 1.

may so speak,) as to fetch him to life out of his grave, that he might lay such a strong foundation as this for faith in his name. No, he himself had declared by the mouth of David, the royal ancestor of this person, that he would destroy all those *that speak leasing*[e] (or lies). And therefore would not have restored one to life whom they had destroyed upon that account, if he had been indeed guilty of speaking lies; but rather have taken care that their sentence might have been confirmed, by keeping him for ever in his tomb.

But since our Saviour thus preached that he was the Son of God, and since he asserted this with as great plainness at his death as he had done in his life, and since he foretold his own resurrection, and that by his own power, and alleged it as the last and greatest sign of his truth in this assertion; he hath proved it beyond contradiction by rising again punctually at the time appointed. Which is the testimony of God to our Saviour, whereby he hath confirmed and established our Saviour's word: and, in effect, said what he had said himself, that he is the Son of God. Which truth is the great support and comfort of our souls; God having *laid help* (as it appears by this) *upon one that is mighty to save,* because he is really God as well as man; and therefore present to us at all times and in all places, privy to our most secret thoughts and desires, when we cannot speak a word; able to succour every one throughout the whole world who comes to God by him, and depends upon his almighty grace.

II.

Secondly, this the apostles had the greater reason to press and imprint upon men's minds and memories, because the resurrection of Christ removed the greatest scandal that lay in the way to the belief of this fundamental doctrine of his being the Son of God, which was the *offence of the cross.* This was a very great stumblingblock to the Jews, (even to those who had some good persuasions of our Saviour,) that he, who appeared as their king, should be crucified, that is, exposed to the most shameful and ignominious death in the world. This they thought would expose them also to the laughter and scorn of their neighbours, if they should profess themselves the followers of one who died amongst thieves, and whose life was not valued

[e] Psalm v. 6.

by the wise men of their nation so much as the life of a seditious murderer. The Gentiles also thought this *foolishness*, a mere sottish humour of some dull people, to addict themselves to the service of a man that hung upon a gibbet, and there made a most shameful end.

And so they might have thought still, if it had not been for his resurrection, which took away this scandal, and made it appear that it was no folly nor disgrace to honour one whom God had most highly honoured above all other men. His glory now shone the brighter, because the most base, ignoble and infamous death of all others could not obscure it. He appeared now like the sun, which after it hath been a while wrapped up in a very thick cloud breaks forth with the greater splendour.

This therefore was to be asserted and firmly settled, because it advanced him above all other lawgivers whatsoever, who still lie in their tombs, if their ashes have not been long ago scattered into the air, and blown nobody knows whither. They have a memory indeed in story, but it is that they are dead, and have no authority now to demand obedience to their laws.

This exalts our blessed Lord and Saviour above the greatest kings and conquerors that ever have been in the world; who after all their achievements over others were at last utterly defeated by death, and so vanquished as never to recover their thrones any more. Search after the sepulchres of all the Cæsars, read their inscriptions, if there be any remaining, and that which seems to raise their names, and to make them great, in truth depresses them and lays them low; since after the loftiest titles upon their monuments they confess them to lie buried underneath:

Hic jacet terrarum Dominus.

'Here lies the lord of all the earth' was the highest style wherein the goodliest monuments of earthly monarchs could speak. But our Saviour's tomb spake another language, or rather the angels of God told his disciples when they came to visit it,

Surrexit, non est hic.

He is risen, he is not here. Why seek ye the living among the dead[f]*?* He is *cælorum Dominus*, 'the Lord of the heavens' as well as of the earth; whither you shall see him ascend, and

[f] Mark xvi. 6; Luke xxiv. 5.

there he shall live for evermore. This great Lord never ceases to reign: he hath no successor in his kingdom, but, as God himself, sitteth King for ever and ever.

Which when the nations of the world heard, and it was substantially proved, how could they choose but say, (notwithstanding the scandal of the cross,) as they do in the Book of the Revelation:

Who would not fear thee, O Lord thou king of saints? who would not glorify thy name? for thou only art holy, or sacred. *Thy throne, O God,* (as it is elsewhere) *is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre: thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows:* that is, raised him above all the kings that ever were.

Thus with respect to Christ himself, we ought to commemorate his resurrection with the greatest joy, (as I might show, if it were not time to proceed to the other particulars,) because it was in order to his own advancement to the throne of glory, as the reward of his ignominious sufferings.

III.

Thirdly, as his resurrection did him more honour than his death had done him disgrace, so it proved likewise that by his death he had given to God all the satisfaction that he desired. And therefore is most necessary to be firmly believed and steadfastly preserved in our memories, that we who do confess him may all rest assured, that by his blood, which he shed upon the cross for us, he hath made a complete propitiation for the sins of all the world.

He himself said before he died, that he would *give his flesh for the life of the world*[g]: that is, offer up his own body unto God a voluntary sacrifice, to preserve us from eternal death. For he *laid down his life of himself,* as he professed[h], and without his consent no man had power to take it away, and he truly laid it down as *the blood of the new testament for the remission of sins,* as he likewise himself speaks just before his death[i].

Now if his blood had not been an acceptable sacrifice unto God, upon this account for which it was offered, or if there had

[g] John vi. 51. [h] John x. 18. [i] Matt. xxvi. 28.

remained any thing more to be done, which God required or expected from him for the expiation of our sins, (which was the end, he tells us, of his sacrifice,) God would not have raised him out of his grave. For that was not only to acquit him of all the pretended crimes for which the Jews unjustly condemned him; but to free him also from *the iniquity of us all, which the Lord* (as the prophet speaks, Isaiah liii. 6,) *laid upon him,* and to declare publicly to all the world, that he had received full satisfaction for them and demanded no more.

Nay, by his resurrection God not only testified that his blood was most precious in his sight, and had obtained what he intended, but also enabled him to go with it himself into the heavens, there to perpetuate this sacrifice to the end of the world, and by virtue of it make intercession for us.

For we are to look upon his rising again after he was slain, to be in order to his doing just as the high priest under the law did; who taking the blood which had been shed at the altar, on the great day of atonement, carried it into the most holy place, where the glory of the Lord resided, and there presented it unto him; from whence, if he came forth alive, it was a final declaration that God was well pleased with the sacrifice, and was at peace with his people. In like manner did our blessed Lord and Saviour, who is both our great High Priest and also our expiatory sacrifice, after his blood had been shed upon the cross, gather it up again at his resurrection, and go with it into the highest heavens, there to appear with it in the presence of God for us. And from thence hath already begun to bless us, by sending the Holy Ghost to us, as an undoubted testimony that his blood hath made the atonement which he designed. Whereof we shall be more assured at the consummation of all things; when we shall see him come in person out of the most holy place at the last day, and appear alive *the second time, without sin unto salvation* [k].

But for the present it is evident by his resurrection, and his sending the Holy Ghost, (which Tertullian well calls his *vis vicaria,* or his 'power which supplies his place' till he come again,) that he hath fully expiated our sins, so as to *obtain an eternal redemption for us;* and will also appear in person to

[k] Heb. ix. ult.

our salvation, because he hath by the same resurrection overcome death, which was the punishment of sin.

The conquest of that was a sufficient declaration that sin hath lost its power over those who by obedient belief on his name are made one body with him. They may be satisfied that it can no more hold them for ever in its chains than it could him, whose members they are. And consequently that their sins (of which death, as I said, was the punishment) are certainly cancelled and blotted out; so that they may comfortably wait upon God *for his Son from heaven, whom he hath raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come*[l].

Whereas, if he had not risen from the dead, we could have had no assurance, no, not by his death and passion, of remission of sin, because there would have been no proof that the punishment of it (viz. death) was taken away, without which we cannot be said to be forgiven. No, St. Paul openly professes, *If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins*[m]. They are not remitted, that is, but we are still liable to undergo the punishment of them: it is not apparent that we shall be acquitted, and freed from that obligation to suffer the punishment of sin, unless we believe Christ's resurrection.

He made indeed a new covenant in his blood, which promises remission of sin; but what assurance can we have that his blood is accepted with God for this end, and that Christ hath power to make good his promise, to pardon our sins, to release us from the punishment of them, by delivering us from death and from the wrath to come, if he be not risen from the dead? None at all, but as St. Paul there asserts just before, ver. 15, *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain; and your faith is also vain.* We have no ground to publish, nor you to receive, such great things as we promise, unless we are as sure of this as we are that Christ died.

Therefore this was absolutely necessary to be established and settled in the minds of believers, by all the labour and pains the apostles could take; that as Christ *was delivered for our offences,* (they are the words of the same St. Paul, Rom. iv.

[l] 1 Thess. i. 10. [m] 1 Cor. xv. 17.

ult.,) *so he was raised again for our justification.* But further I must add that,

IV.

Fourthly, the resurrection of Christ was necessary to be established in men's belief, and in their remembrance, because it was the verification of the whole gospel; the great proof of all that Christ had taught his disciples; the Christian religion in an epitome; the doctrine of Christ in one word. Which is the ground of that speech of the apostle, *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*[n]. This he makes to be the sum of Christian belief; because he that was persuaded of this, and openly acknowledged it, must unavoidably believe and own the whole gospel. The truth of which Christ sealed by his blood; and God the Father sealed by raising him from the dead. Which assured all that believed it there was no other way to life and happiness but that alone, which the Lord Jesus, who is *the way, the truth and the life*, had delivered.

And a far greater testimony this was, which God gave to the gospel, than had been given to the law of Moses; for after he was buried, we hear no more of him till our Saviour saw him in the holy mount, together with Elias; where they discoursed with him of his glorious *decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* Moses indeed wrought miracles, he heard voices from heaven, there were appearances of angels to him upon some occasions, his face shone, as our Saviour's did when he was transfigured: but as most of these were more frequent, and all of them more glorious in the giving of the gospel, so, besides them all, the Author of it rose from the dead, as he said he would, to prove that God, who had sent his prophets before, had now sent his Son to publish his will unto the world.

If we believe this, then we are obliged, and there is no way to avoid it, to entertain all his doctrine, to lay to heart his commands, to take upon us his yoke, and submit ourselves to the government of his laws; and that, as we hope to obtain remission of sins, and eternal bliss, which are promised to none but the obedient. On the contrary, tribulation and anguish,

[n] Rom. x. 9.

indignation and wrath, are threatened to all those that do evil: which the resurrection of Christ assures us he will not fail to inflict upon them.

And here it will be fit to observe these two things, which are very manifest:

First, that the resurrection of Christ most evidently proved that no man was bound any longer to observe any laws formerly in force, which are not contained in the law of the gospel. But,

Secondly, that we are all thereby necessarily and indispensably tied strictly to observe this law which Christ hath laid upon us.

I. First, I say, it proved the dissolution of all former laws, though of God's own making, and solemnly delivered by Moses unto the Jewish nation. Who were very hard to be persuaded that they needed no longer to trouble themselves with those carnal ordinances, which required them to make a difference of meats, to wash their bodies after several defilements, to wear only a certain kind of garment, and offer such sacrifices as Moses prescribed, (which were a very heavy burden to them,) but only give up themselves to Christ, to be ruled by his easy and gentle laws, of temperance and chastity, meekness and humility, justice and charity, being ready to do good and to forgive, as well as to worship God in spirit and in truth. For unto this the Jews objected, that God had made a covenant with their fathers, by the ministry of Moses, requiring such observances; and that they could not absolve themselves from that bond, which they had received by being circumcised, but stood in dread of being cut off (as the law threatened) if they did not receive that obligation, by circumcision, to observe the whole law of Moses.

Unto which the apostle St. Paul gives satisfaction after this manner, (Romans vii. beginning;) a law (as you all know who are bred up under the discipline of the law) can have dominion over a man no longer than he lives under that law. As for example, a married woman cannot be bound by the law to her husband any longer than he lives. If he die, she is so loose from her husband, that though while he lived she could not honestly marry another man, yet he being dead, she may give herself in marriage to another person, and be no adulteress.

This is the sense of the three first verses of that chapter. To which the Jews might reply, True, if we were no more bound to Moses his law, than a wife is bound to her husband when he is dead, your argument would be good: but how doth it appear that the law of Moses is dead, as it supposes? For if it be not dead, we are still tied to it by your own confession. Unto this the apostle goes on to give satisfaction in the following words, ver. 4: *Wherefore, my brethren,* (i. e. if you allow my principle, then thus I demonstrate your obligation to the law ceases,) *ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God.* In which words he asserts, that by the death of Christ (for that he means by his *body*) there was an end put to their law: from all obligation to which they were as much released as a wife is from her husband when he is gone out of this world, (that is the meaning of *ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ,*) for the whole law of Moses depended upon their sacrifices; which all having respect to the sacrifice of Christ, his body being offered up put a conclusion to them, (which could have no effect if they continued them,) and demonstrated they had no obligation to observe that law, but were left free now, to subject themselves to a new law, (which he calls being *married to another.*) and they might easily know whose law that was, even his *who is raised from the dead.* They were really absolved from the Mosaical religion, by the death of Christ's body, as much as a wife is from her husband when he is extinct: but that which fully convinced them of it, and moved them to embrace a new religion, was the resurrection of that body of Christ from the dead. They could not have believed their freedom, and so none would have forsaken their old discipline, and betaken themselves to Christ, if his resurrection had not followed his death: which solidly proved the efficacy of it to abolish the law of Moses. For this being established, none could see any good reason to adhere still to their former rites and ceremonies; there being such a powerful proof of the authority of Christ to take them all away, and settle a better way of living in their room; which the apostle calls *bringing forth fruit unto God.*

And as this was an argument to persuade the Jews to for-

sake their rites, though appointed by God; so it effectually prevailed with the Gentiles to renounce their idolatrous worship, as we read 1 Thess. i. 9, 10, *Ye know what manner of entrance we had unto you, and how ye turned from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, &c.* We have all great reason so to do, and to be exact and faithful in his service; looking upon ourselves as most strictly tied to the observance of those laws, which are confirmed to be the will of God, by such a demonstration as the resurrection of him that gave them from the dead. This evidently shows which is the other thing I mentioned.

II. That they are utterly inexcusable, who break loose from the laws of Christianity, which hath excused us from all other obligations. For that very reason we are the more strictly bound to obey the gospel; because we are thereby absolved from the law of Moses. The resurrection of Christ doth not more effectually prove, for instance, that the sacrifices which he ordained (and such like rites) are all abolished, than it proves the indispensable obligation that is upon us to offer unto God continually the sacrifices which Christianity prescribes. Which are principally these:

First, the sacrifice of *a broken and contrite heart*, truly grieved for our sins past, and sincerely resolved to do better for the time to come: that is, unfeigned repentance, which was ever necessary before that law was given.

Secondly, the sacrifice of our own body [o], that is, of ourselves to God, which we must devote to him in purity and holiness, temperance and soberness, meekness and humility, and such like virtues; which are infinitely more acceptable than all the beasts in the world.

Thirdly, the sacrifice of *praise and thanksgiving* to God [p] who hath made us partakers of his grace in Christ; which shows us the way to be more happy than we could possibly invent, had we the whole world at will.

Fourthly, the sacrifice of all our animosities and angry resentments, which must be entirely given up to God, for this reason; because *Christ our Passover*, or Paschal Lamb, *is offered for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with the*

[o] Rom. xii. 1. [p] Heb. xiii. 15.

old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth[q]; which was part of the anthem yesterday. For it is vain to pretend to love God, if we hate one another. The praises we bestow upon him will signify nothing, if we jar and quarrel among ourselves. This will spoil all the melody of our psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, wherein at this festival we laud his holy name.

Lastly, the sacrifice of alms seems to be the chief of all, which the apostle would no more have us to forget, than the resurrection of Christ from the dead. *But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*[r]. He had been proving in the foregoing part of the Epistle, that Christ, being risen from the dead, was not only gone into the heavens, but there made an high priest *at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens*[s], whereby he can by virtue of his sacrifice, once offered, do that for us which the priests of old could not by all the sacrifices which they offered daily; bring us, i. e. into that *high and holy place, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*, which he offered for us. From whence he infers, that as all Christians should hold fast their profession, with a true heart and pure conscience; constantly enduring, with such a steadfast faith as was in the ancient worthies, whatsoever God pleases; having Christ especially in their eye, *the Author and Finisher of our faith, &c.* So he at last, in the conclusion of all, presses the great duty of charity, ver. 1 of this xiiith chapter, *Let brotherly love continue.* Which he illustrates by some instances in the two following verses; and then, after some other instructions, renews his exhortation, in these famous words I have now mentioned: *But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* And let me press the same duty upon you, (before I proceed any further,) as both the feast which we keep, and the place where we are assembled, and the occasion of our meeting together require.

We are here assembled in the house of God, to commemorate the wonderful love and power of God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. For which, I doubt not, you

[q] 1 Cor. v. 7, 8. [r] Heb. xiii. 16. [s] Heb. viii. 1.

are all ready devoutly to offer unto him *the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks unto his name;* as the foregoing words (ver. 15.) exhort you. But the apostle tells you further, that you must not content yourselves, nor think to please God with empty praises and acknowledgments; but *remember to do good and communicate* to the necessities of others; for these are the sacrifices which are most grateful to his Majesty.

There was an express command in the law of Moses which we find often repeated, that when the children of Israel came to worship the Lord *none should appear before him empty.* Which was first ordained, I observe, when he enjoined them to keep the feast of the Passover[t]. But it is afterwards explained to be meant also of the other two great feasts, (mentioned in the following verses,) *Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord, in the place which he shall choose, &c., and they shall not appear before the Lord empty*[u]*:* that is, without some present unto him, as a tribute of thankfulness for the benefits they had received; and as an acknowledgment that he was the supreme Lord of all, and they but tenants under him.

Which precept is not less reasonable to be observed now than it was under the law, but far more reasonable; he being our Lord by a higher title, of our redemption by Christ Jesus; and the blessings of the gospel, for which we make our thankful acknowledgments, infinitely transcending their deliverance out of the bondage of Egypt, and the fruitful seasons which they afterwards enjoyed in the land of Canaan.

Therefore, if not at all our holy assemblies, yet at our principal festivals, (which are three also,) we are bound sure to bring along with us some alms and oblations to our almighty Benefactor. Particularly now at this feast, which is answerable to their passover, no man ought to appear before the Lord empty; but full, at least, of most hearty resolutions, that he will do some charitable act or other; as a token of his gratitude to God, who hath done so much for him; and as a recognition of his supreme dominion over all.

It is always a Christian duty to contribute to the relief of those that are in need; but now, at such a time as this, it is a piece of worship, a part of the divine service; without which

[t] Exod. xxiii. 15. [u] Deut. xvi. 16.

our solemn feasts and praises of God will be but empty sounds and avail us nothing.

Let us therefore be careful not to forget to do good; but together with the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offer this most acceptable sacrifice, which God expects should attend upon the other.

Never fail to communicate to others, when you commemorate how bountiful God hath been to you. Especially now, when you remember the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, to be your Advocate with the Father, and to exercise the office of a merciful and compassionate High Priest for you in the heavens; let it raise and stir up in your hearts bowels of mercy and pity, for the help and relief of your distressed brethren.

When you feel your hearts moved to give thanks to God, saying with St. Peter i. 13, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;* let this grateful sense of his goodness move you also to be *merciful, as your heavenly Father is merciful;* that thereby you may excite others to bless him as well as yourselves.

Do good to the poor and needy, because he is so very good to you, as to make you able to do good to them. And the more good God hath done any of you, look upon yourselves as bound to do the more to others. For that was the rule which God gave for their charity at the three great festivals amongst the Jews, as you read Deut. xvi. 17: *Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee.*

Consider now how God hath blessed every one of you here present, and then look upon yourselves as engaged to offer to him something proportionable for the comfort of others at this time: when you appear before him to thank him for the great blessings of all sorts which you enjoy by the favour of his goodness towards you. And that for these two reasons:

First, because the commemoration of God's benefits to us, of whatsoever kind they be, necessarily obliges us (nay, if we have any sense, naturally inclines us) to make some suitable return to him. Who needing nothing himself, bids us give it to

those that do: and he will take it as bestowed upon him. And,

Secondly, because it is the very intention of this particular benefit which we now commemorate, viz. Christ's resurrection from the dead, to raise up our hearts above this world, and to quicken us to all good works; of which these sacrifices are the chief. So that he hath but a name to live who still remains covetous, and for whom nobody is the better. He is dead and buried in earthly affections, and is not risen with Christ: for if he were, he would *seek the things that are above* (as the apostle speaks Coloss. iii. 1.), *lay up treasure in heaven, and not set his heart on things here beneath.*

And accordingly we find this blessed fruit of the resurrection of Christ, as soon as ever it was published, in the first converts to Christianity. For *all that believed had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need*[x]. Immediately, that is, their minds were quite taken off from this world; and they apprehended nothing more necessary than to make provision for another world where Christ is: by employing all that they possessed here in the best manner they could for his service. As you are further informed Acts iv. 33, if it be rightly understood; *With great power the apostle gave witness of the resurrection; and great grace was upon them all.* This χάρις, or *grace*, was charity; as appears by the proof he gives of it in the next words: *Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessed of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man as he had need.*

You are not bound indeed to sell all you have, and give it away to pious uses as they did, (which was practised only at Jerusalem, and in no other church; for some special reasons, not now to be mentioned,) but yet you must not keep all you possess to yourselves; for the apostles expected some of this good fruit in all other churches where they sowed the seed of the gospel. Which was wonderfully fruitful in some churches, particularly those of Macedonia; who brought forth, as I may say, an hundredfold. For such was the grace of God bestowed

[x] Acts ii. 44.

on them, that in *a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality:* for they gave *to their power*, nay, *beyond their power; praying* the apostle *with much entreaty to receive their gift*, &c.[y] By which noble example St. Paul provokes the Corinthian church (ver. 7.) to a pious emulation of those excellent Christians; that *as they abounded in every thing, in faith, in utterance, and knowledge, &c., so they might abound in this grace also.*

And the like fruit the preaching of the resurrection hath brought forth in abundance among your worthy ancestors in this great city; else we should not have had such a large catalogue of good works as I am now to report to you, of a great number of poor children and other poor people maintained in the several hospitals under the pious care of the lord mayor, commonalty, and citizens of the city of London, the year last past.

[Here followed the Report.]

After the Report.

See here, right honourable and well-beloved, what powerful motives you have to this *grace*, as the apostle calls it. You have the worthy examples of those who have gone before you in well-doing: which it is rank hypocrisy to commend and extol without imitation. You have the care and fidelity of those who are intrusted with their bounty to provoke you to this sort of charity, in augmenting the revenues of the several hospitals. Both because you are sure what is so bestowed will be faithfully employed, and employed to the relief of those who are undoubtedly necessitous: and because their revenues, you see by the Report, are much impaired; and yet very considerable numbers have been most mercifully relieved.

For to the honour of this renowned city be it spoken, and to the honour also of our religion, there have not been more noble things of this kind done in any place of the world than have been done here since the reformation of religion. Which they of the Romish faction have been wont to revile with most impudent calumnies, saying, that "good works died, together

[y] 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, &c.

with their way of devotion; and that we have nothing but an empty faith left among us." Which is like all the rest of the impostnres whereby that religion subsists. For this was confuted in the very beginning of the Reformation. Forty years after which, (now above an hundred years ago,) a great man [z], upon this very occasion, challenged Rome or any other city in Christendom to produce such a show as we see here this day. And it is much increased, I doubt not, since that time: though then, he saith, he was able to prove that "there had been more done for the increase of learning, and providing for the poor, within these forty years since the church was reformed from its errors, than had been done in any Christian realm, not only within the same forty years, (which was sufficient to stop their mouths,) but in any forty years upward, during all the time of popery."

And if they were so liberal in those days, when they were but newly crept out of the darkness of superstition, how much more should we abound in this virtue, who by God's singular goodness have long enjoyed the light of the gospel! who have had also so many examples since of bountiful benefactors; who have been taught this duty so frequently, and been taught it not only by God's word, but by his rod. Whose discipline some years ago instructed us how uncertain all our possessions are; as we beheld in those dreadful flames, which consumed so many goodly buildings, and spared neither God's houses nor the poor's.

And now we have been very lately taught this duty again, in a contrary method, by the most merciful deliverance God hath graciously bestowed upon our king, this church and kingdom from the hands of bloodthirsty men. Who if they had

[z] ["I will be able to prove that learning in the foundation of schools, and increase of revenues within colleges, and the poor in the foundation of almshouses, and increase of perpetuities to them, have received greater help in this realm within these forty years last past, since not the starting up of our church, as they fondly use to speak, but since the reforming ours from the errors of theirs, than it hath, I say, in any realm Christian, not only within the selfsame forty years, (which were enough to stop their mouths,) but also than it hath in any forty years upward, during all the time of popery; which I speak partly of mine own knowledge, and partly by sufficient grave information. This may be said, and said truly."] Dr. (afterwards bishop) Andrews' sermon at the Spittle, 1588, p. 17. [vol. v. p. 37. 8vo, Oxford, 1841–3.]

succeeded in their execrable designs of assassination, insurrection, and invasion, this city, in all likelihood, had been exposed to spoil and rapine, if not laid desolate, by the barbarous cruelty of that nation which hath not been wont to spare those of their own religion from the most terrible executions, no, not their religious houses, (as they call their monasteries,) which they have laid in heaps of rubbish.

This is a mighty reason we should dedicate some part of those goods to God, which might have been all ravaged from us if he had not most graciously secured them unto us.

But there is a far stronger reason, which is, that God strictly requires this grace of you, as you hope for mercy from him at that great day when you must appear before our Lord, who, *being raised from the dead is ordained by him to be the judge of the quick and dead* [a]. If he find then you have been wont to appear before him at these solemnities with empty hearts and hands, having put him off merely with verbal praises, you must not expect a favourable sentence from him; for, quite contrary, *he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy* [b].

For they who have been unjust and fraudulent in their dealing, who have oppressed their brethren, or used any extortion, can never answer it unto God, if they do not, by giving alms, purge their estates from those ill-gotten goods: which they cannot restore to their right owners, because they know not, perhaps, whom they have particularly wronged, or where to find them.

And as for those who have honestly gotten their estates, they are plainly bound in gratitude to God to make him a present of some portion of them; who is the Donor of the whole, and expects such an acknowledgment of his divine blessing upon their true endeavours.

And whether you have done thus, assure yourselves, will be strictly examined at that great day, as our Saviour himself teacheth us in that known place [c], which I beseech consider at your leisure. Some then will be apt to say, (according as the proceedings at this tribunal are there represented,) "Lord, though I have been a great sinner, yet I have been very penitent for my offences; and have not only very sorrowfully

[a] Acts x. 41, 42. [b] James ii. 13. [c] Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

bewailed them, but utterly forsaken them. "How doth that appear?" will the Judge then inquire. "Have you restored that which was deceitfully and unjustly gotten? Or have you given it to the poor, as I directed you in those words, *Give alms of such things as you have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you*[d]*?*" And if you cannot return the answer of a good conscience, and faithfully say you have so done, your repentance will be rejected.

And if others plead their justice and honesty, that they never wronged or defrauded any body, but always paid every man his own, the Judge will demand, "But what good did you do with all the wealth that I blessed your honest diligence withal? You have been just, it is true, but have you been charitable? Have you supplied the needs of the poor, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, taken care of the sick, and of the prisoners?" &c. If not, your justice will prove a lame and defective virtue; unable to support you, and make you stand in that dreadful judgment.

Now that there will be such an audit, wherein every man shall be acccountable to God for what he hath done in the body, the resurrection of Christ, which we now remember, is the great and most convincing proof; as the apostle teaches us in Acts xvii. 30, 31, where he saith, *God commands all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

Which leads me now to the next general head propounded in the beginning.

V.

Fifthly, that the resurrection of Christ is a most evident demonstration of future rewards in the other world to all that live godly in Christ Jesus. For, as it verified his whole Gospel, of which this is a part, that *they that believe in him shall have everlasting life;* so it is an instance and example of the truth of it, that they who do well shall not go unrewarded, how ill soever they be used here. For our Lord is the *first-fruits of those that sleep:* and hath shown by what is done for him what he will certainly do for us. And it is to be considered

[d] Luke xi. 41.

also, that he hath power by his resurrection to perform his own promise: the gift of eternal life is in his own hands. *For this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life*[e]. That is, all the witnesses to the truth of Christianity testify this, that God will give us eternal life; and that it is in his Son's power to bestow it: and therefore he that is a Christian, (i. e. sincerely and effectually believes on his Son,) that man may be confident of eternal life.

VI.

Sixthly, which is the most powerful encouragement to patient continuance in well doing; though, after all the good we do here, we should suffer never so much for righteousness' sake. This, as well as the former, would deserve to be enlarged, if I had room for it in this discourse, which is to be confined within the bounds of a sermon. Which though I am unwilling to transgress, yet I beg leave to say a few words of this last thing, because my text hath a particular respect to it.

The apostle, you heard in the beginning, had exhorted his son Timothy to *endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;* and not to flinch from his duty, though he encountered in the discharge of it never so many difficulties. Which he knew he would easily overcome, if he did but remember Jesus his Lord and Master *of the seed of David;* and how he was *raised from the dead according to his Gospel.* This was sufficient to inspire him with courage and resolution, if he always kept it in mind. For what if he was persecuted? What if he was reproached, and vilified, and turned out of doors? &c. So was David, so was Jesus, who was every way *of the seed of David:* both as he was born of that family, and as he endured the like persecutions and vile usage from the Pharisees, as David had from Saul. But both their sufferings, David's and his, ended at last in a kingdom: and, as St. Paul saith elsewhere of our Saviour, *Though he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives by the power of God*[f].

Let us then be of good courage, for *because he lives we shall live also:* and where *he is, there shall his faithful servant be also.* So he hath told us himself, *who is the faithful and true*

[e] 1 John v. 11, 12. [f] 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

witness; the first begotten from the dead; the Prince of all the kings of the earth: who will never suffer those who are faithful to him to lose by his service, but beget them all again, after they are dead, unto an endless and heavenly life; that they, being children of the resurrection, may reign with him in his celestial kingdom.

Ye have heard, saith St. James, ver. 11, *of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* For all his affliction concluded in a far more flourishing condition than he enjoyed before they befell him: and if we could believe what is added in some copies of the LXX to that book, he was also made partaker of such an honour as set a special mark of God's favour upon him, and declared how highly he valued his patience. For after the last words of that book of Job according to the original, (*So Job died old and full of days,*) some Greek copies add, Γέγραπται δ' αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναστήσεσθαι, &c. 'It is written also, that he should rise to life again with those whom the Lord raiseth up.' "The word πάλιν, 'again,'" saith Olympiodorus[e], "denotes that he should have another resurrection here, besides that which he had from poverty and misery to a splendid state of prosperity: and that was when Christ rose from the dead. When *the graves were opened; and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many*[f]." Now by Suidas and others it appears that there was a tradition which some believed, that Job was among those saints that arose with our Saviour; which, if it be true, was to demonstrate the high esteem that God hath of humble patience; which moved him to do this man the honour of accompanying our Saviour at his resurrection, who had been so memorable for this virtue. For so Suidas's words are: "He triumphed gloriously after his agonies, he set up his trophies; not such as those in the Olympics or other celebrated games among the Greeks, but far more honourable[g]." For besides what God restored to him of worldly blessings before he died, this was τὸ ἔσχατον, 'the last and greatest' prize which he won, to rise to life again with our Saviour, when he overcame death.

But howsoever that be, we have *a more sure word* (as St.

[e] [Caten. in Job. p. 612.] [f] Matt. xxvii. 52, 53. [g] [Col. 1792 C.]

Peter speaks) upon which to build our faith, and support our patience in well-doing. *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*[h]. For he will *appear the second time* (as you have heard); and *when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it.* Therefore *be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life.*

Thus I have shown you there was more to be seen in an empty sepulchre than when the corpse was in it.

For if our Lord be risen, and be not there, (as the angel said,) then we see he was the Son of God. We *see him that by suffering death was made a little lower than the angels crowned with glory and honour.* We see that God is reconciled unto sinners, and that death hath lost its sting. We see the gospel is the rule according to which we ought to order our life. We see our high and heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. And lastly, we see, that as glorious things are laid up in store for those that love and obey him, so nothing can *separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

And *therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*[i].

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen[k].

[h] 1 Thess. iv. 14. [i] 1 Cor. xv. 58. [k] Heb. xiii. 20. 21.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL

IN

THE ABBEY CHURCH AT WESTMINSTER,

Nov. 5, 1696,

BEING

THE ANNIVERSARY THANKSGIVING FOR THE HAPPY DELIVERANCE FROM THE GUNPOWDER TREASON, AND ALSO FOR THE HAPPY ARRIVAL OF HIS PRESENT MAJESTY ON THIS DAY, FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF OUR CHURCH AND NATION.

Die Veneris, Nov. 6, 1696.

It is ordered by the lords spiritual and temporal, in parliament assembled, that the thanks of this house shall and are hereby given to the lord bishop of Ely, for his sermon preached yesterday in the Abbey Church at Westminster, and he is hereby desired to print and publish the same.

MATH. JOHNSON.
Cler. Parliamentor.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE LORDS,

November 5, 1696.

Daniel iv. 35.

——*And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

THESE words are part of a pious declaration which king Nebuchadnezzar set forth, unto all people, nations, and languages, *to show* (as he saith in his preface to it, ver. 2) *the signs and the wonders which the high God had wrought toward him.* Which having profoundly admired and adored in the next words, (*How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders!* [a]) he proceeds to give the world an account what an amazing turn there had lately been in his affairs. For when he was lifted up to the highest pitch of princely power and glory, and had nothing to fear on earth, he was admonished from heaven in a dream of his sudden fall into a condition as low as the beasts; in which he was to remain till he should be made sensible *that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will* [b]. Accordingly he relates how all this not long after came to pass. The effect of which was, that it took down his pride, (for which so great an abasement was the most proper remedy,) and brought him to a sober sense that God governs the world, and orders all things every where by his overruling Providence, with an absolute power which none can withstand or control.

Which is a meditation very seasonable at this time, when we are met together to commemorate the wonderful providence of God over us in this church and kingdom, upon a double account. First, in discovering and defeating one of the deepest and most

[a] Daniel iv. 3. [b] Ver. 17.

desperate conspiracies against us that ever was hatched in hell; secondly, in disappointing the same restless enemies again, when by their fraud and our folly they had contrived themselves into such an height of power, that we had no means left to preserve our religion and liberties.

Had we no other arguments of the overruling power of God's eternal providence in the world but these and such as these, they might be sufficient to awaken the sense of it in your minds, and to make us conclude that *he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*

In treating of which words I shall only consider these two things:

First, the extent of God's sovereign dominion and government.

Secondly, the way and method whereby he governs.

I.

I. For the first of these my text resolves us that there is nothing exempt from it; but it reaches to every creature throughout the whole world, which are comprehended in these words, *the army of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth.*

By the former of which, *the army* or *host* of heaven, the holy Scriptures are wont to express both those beings in the heaven that are invisible, and those that are visible, viz. the angels, and the sun, moon, and stars. Both these are called *the host of heaven;* and with respect to both God is styled *the Lord of hosts.*

And first, let us look with our minds into the invisible world, the world of spirits, both good and bad. For that there are such beings hath been the sense of all mankind in all ages, (as it were easy to show, if this were a place proper for it,) but the holy Scriptures have given us the clearest and fullest account of them; not only informing us, but giving us particular instances how God rules and governs them with an absolute authority; the good angels obeying his voice, and the devils trembling at his presence. That is, he governs the good by his will, and he restrains the evil by his almighty power. The good cheerfully perform his pleasure, and the evil are con-

strained to do it; being made to serve the ends of his wise providence, where they design to gratify their own malice.

Out of those sacred records therefore I shall briefly lay before you the devout sense which the most excellent persons have had of the extent of God's providence, without entering into the other evident proofs we have of this doctrine.

Read then and consider those words of the royal psalmist, and they will inform you how God governs the holy angels. *Bless the Lord, ye angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure*[c]. The like you read in the very next Psalm: *He maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire*[d]. For so did the angels sometimes appear, in a glittering and shining manner, like a flame of fire.

And hence it is that they are styled *the chariots of God;* because they are an host or army to execute his will and pleasure. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai*[e], *&c.* And hence also they are said more particularly to be *ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*[f]. That is, they minister to the will of God for the preservation and safety of good Christians; unto whom God designs a happiness beyond this world, in his heavenly kingdom, and therefore will not let them want his care of them while they continue here.

And in like manner the same sovereignty of God is represented in holy Scripture as governing the devils also; whom he awes and restrains by his power. For when he cast them out of heaven for their rebellion against him, he *delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*[g]. This judgment they expect, and tremble at the thoughts of it; because they know they cannot avoid it; and thence are said to *believe and tremble*[h]. And they expect it *in chains;* feel, that is, the power of God upon them, tying them up and restraining them, so that they cannot do what, nor go whither they please; but are like great malefactors, who, till they are brought before the

[c] Psalm ciii. 20.
[d] Psalm civ. 4.
[e] Psalm lxviii. 17.
[f] Heb. i. ult.
[g] 2 Pet. ii. 4.
[h] James ii. 19.

judge, are bound in chains, and cannot stir but whither their keeper thinks fit to suffer them.

Thus we find they were perfectly subject to our blessed Saviour; and by him to those whom he sent to preach the gospel, who at their return came and told him, *Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name*[i]. They fled when they did but hear of him; they quitted their possession when his power approached; they were not able to stand before his authority. Which is sufficient to show how God rules the invisible world in every part of it, over all the hosts of angels and legions of devils, who cannot resist his word.

And now if we lift up our eyes unto the visible heaven, we behold there another army, the sun, moon, and stars, running the course that God hath appointed them; and we read also of their standing still at his commandment. For *he bringeth the sun as a bridegroom out of his chamber*, (saith the psalmist,) *and it rejoiceth as a strong* young *man to run a race*[k]. But if he pleases he can stop its course, and hinder its motion; as he did in the days of Joshua, when he said, *Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies*[l]. The *stars* also are said to have *fought in their courses against Sisera*[m], by pouring out, perhaps, some violent storm upon him; which discomfited his numerous army, and broke their ranks, and put them into such disorder, that it was apparent Heaven fought against them.

And accordingly the *thunder*, which is said also to come out of heaven, is called *the voice of God*[n]; who is said also in the first Lesson appointed for this day to shoot out *lightning like arrows*[o]; whereby David's enemies were scattered. The *clouds* of heaven likewise he is said in other places to *make his chariot, and to walk upon the wings of the wind*[p]: because he hath often employed those in terrible blasts, and furious tempests of rain and hail and stormy winds, which, as the psalmist elsewhere says, *fulfil his pleasure.*

[i] Luke x. 17.
[k] Psalm xix. 5.
[l] Joshua x. 12, 13.
[m] Judges v. 20.
[n] Psalm xxix. 5, 7, 8.
[o] 2 Sam. xxii. 14, 15.
[p] Psalm civ. 3.

II. And now if we bring our thoughts down from the upper regions of the world unto these lower, wherein we live, we have the same devout acknowledgments of all good men, that he hath an absolute dominion there, and doth according to his will *among the inhabitants of the earth*, as well as in *the army of heaven*. For the earth itself is said to tremble and shake before him[q], as it did at the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, and at other times. *He ruleth also the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise he stilleth them*[r]. Nor is his dominion limited to inanimate creatures, but extends also to *every living thing, to whom he opens his hand, and satisfies their desire*[s]. But the principal inhabitants of the earth are mankind, to whom he hath given dominion over all other creatures[t], and rules over men as men rule over other things. *For he turneth man to destruction; and sayeth, Return, ye children of men*[u]. He lifts up and casts down according to his pleasure. He sets up one and puts down another; for he is the Judge whose sentence none can reverse.

Nor doth he rule over men's outward concernments only, but sways their minds and moves and influences their hearts: for *the preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord*[x].

Which is true, not only of mean persons, men of low degree, of easy and flexible minds; but of the highest and mightiest orders, of the stoutest and most undaunted spirits, of kings and princes, of their great captains and commanders, their wise counsellors and deep statesmen, whom he frequently infatuates and brings their counsels to naught, when they cross his will: for *with him* is both *strength and wisdom* (as Job admirably speaks): *he leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty*[y]. This was the sense of that holy man in the most ancient times, and posterity made the same observations. For

[q] 2 Sam. xxii. 8: Psalm civ. 37.
[r] Psalm lxxxix. 9.
[s] Psalm cxlv. 16.
[t] Genesis i. 28.
[u] Psalm xc. 3.
[x] Proverbs xvi. 1.
[y] Job xii. 16, &c.

many kings (saith the son of Sirach) *have sat down upon the ground, and one that was never thought of hath worn the crown. Many mighty men have been greatly disgraced, and the honourable delivered into other men's hands*[z].

Nor, lastly, doth he govern single persons only, but kingdoms also, and the greatest societies of men. From whence he is called *the God of the kingdoms of the earth*[a], and said to *rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen*, (as well as over his people Israel,) with such a *power and might, as none is able to withstand*[b].

Thus I have, as briefly as I could, represented the extent of God's dominion and providence, which rules over the whole world, visible and invisible; reaching to all things in heaven and to all in earth; to all and every creature, and to all the concerns of every one of them.

II.

I proceed now to the second thing I undertook, which is to show the way and method of this divine government, whereby it will appear that all this that I have reported from the holy Scripture is evidently true, and cannot be denied by those who believe God to be the Creator of heaven and of earth.

And here I shall consider only these four things:

First, that God sees and knows all things throughout the world.

Secondly, that nothing can come to pass but what he either effects or permits.

Thirdly, he effects and permits nothing but for wise and worthy ends. And,

Fourthly, he certainly accomplishes these ends, and that by such means as he pleases.

1. First, I say, God sees and knows all things, all persons, and whatsoever appertains unto them; and that in all possible measures, in measures infinite and incomprehensible by us; but which we are sure to be true, because he made and formed all things, and therefore must be privy to every motion which it is possible for them to have, and is present to every the smallest inclination they make to any motion. He knows their nature, he understands the virtue of every cause, he perfectly comprehends what it can do, and how far it can go; he discerns its in-

[z] Ecclus. xi. 5, 6. [a] 2 Kings xix. 15. [b] 2 Chron. xx. 6.

tentions and what it designs; nothing can be concealed from him, but every thing lies naked, bare, and open before him. For *the eyes of the Lord*, saith his prophet, *run to and fro throughout the whole earth*[c], that is, his knowledge comprehends all things every where.

And as for man, *his ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*[d]; for *his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*[e].

Nor are his outward actions only exposed to him, but all the thoughts and designs of his heart: for *hell and destruction are before the Lord: how much more then the hearts of the children of men*[f]! The most secret imaginations of their minds, the deepest desires of their souls, all the windings and turnings of their spirits in their most retired consultations, even those motions which are not observed by themselves, are all known to God. Whence those expressions in the prophet Jeremiah, xvii. 10, *I the Lord search the heart and try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.* And in the prophet Ezekiel, xi. 5, *Thus saith the Lord, Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.* Which declare that God doth not only see and know what is subject to outward view, but the very thoughts of men's hearts also; yea, and every one of those thoughts, and the entrance or beginning of them.

II. But further, as he infallibly knows all things, so nothing comes to pass but what he either effects or permits; and permits, not because he cannot, but because he is not pleased to hinder it, for he acts every where *according to his will.* There is a providence in all things under his government, but there is a difference in the exercise of it. That which is good and worthy of God in the mind, and counsels, and actings of men, that may and ought to be ascribed to God and to his grace, as guiding, aiding, and assisting therein. But that which is wicked in them must not be thus ascribed to him, as if he moved or excited them to it, (for he cannot will any thing that is evil,) but only that he did permit it when he could have hindered it, for the accomplishment of such ends as those wicked agents did

[c] 2 Chron. xvi. 9. [d] Prov. v. 21. [e] Prov. xv. 3. [f] Prov. xv. 11.

not think of. In both these are the clear lines of providence, though in different characters.

For how often do we read of God's working what he pleases throughout the world; particularly Psalm cxxxv. 5, 6, *I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.* Where, as he effects what he thinks good, so nothing can be effected by any agent, unless he think good to permit it. For he awes the thoughts, and restrains the passions, and binds the hands, and fetters the goings of men, so that they cannot move a step but as he suffers them. Whence that of Jacob to his wives, *Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times: but God suffered him not to hurt me*[g]; that is, let him proceed no further in his projects than to show his ill intentions towards me. And thus David, speaking of the patriarchs, and of God's respect towards them and care of them, saith, *He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reproved kings for their sake, saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*[h]. The greatest resolution can proceed no further, the strongest power can effect no more than the supreme Governor of all will allow.

III. And as nothing comes to pass but what he either effects or permits, so he effects and permits nothing but for wise and holy ends. He that is infinitely wise cannot but exercise that wisdom in all that falls under its view; for did he not so, he were not infinitely wise. And for the same reason, he that is infinitely holy cannot but design most holy ends in all the contrivances of his wisdom. From whence it is that the holy books ascribe the event of things not merely to his will, but to the counsel of his will. For *with him is wisdom and strength,* (as Job admirably speaks in the chapter before named,) *he hath counsel and understanding. Behold he breaks down, and it cannot be built up again; he shuts up a man, and there can be no opening*[i]. Which he manifests to be true sometimes in such surprising ways, that the prophet Isaiah saith, he is *wonderful in wisdom, and excellent in working*[k]. And Jeremiah, that he is *great in counsel, and mighty in work*[l], and as St. Paul sums

[g] Genesis xxxi. 7.
[h] Psalm cv. 14, 15.
[i] Job xii. 13, 14; [k] Isa. xxviii. 29.
[l] Jer. xxxii. 19.

up this matter, *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*[m].

Nor doth his wisdom manifest itself in his doings only, but in his permissions too; in what he suffers to be done even contrary to his own commands. The sinner intends one thing in the sin he commits, and God intends another in permitting it. The sinner to gratify his own lusts, his pride, his rage, ambition, covetousness, or revenge: but God to magnify his justice, his power and wisdom, whereby he punishes, corrects, amends, improves, and perfects men, according as they are severally qualified for his favour or displeasure.

Thus what Joseph's brethren did to satisfy their envy, God suffered for most excellent purposes; to save their whole family in a sore and general famine, and to accomplish what he said to Abraham, that his seed should long sojourn in Egypt: and thus the invasion of the king of Assyria was permitted by God as a chastisement of the Jews for their many and great sins; but intended by him to fill his coffers by spoil and rapine. *O Assyrian*, saith the Lord by the prophet, *the rod of my anger and the staff in your hand is my indignation*[n]. Did he then intend to serve God in this expedition, and execute his anger? No such thing: for thus it follows, ver. 7, *Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.* That is, to make all the ravage he is able.

Thus you see that whatsoever men design and intend, God always designs some just, wise, and holy end, in all that he effects or permits in the world.

IV. And as he designs these ends, so they certainly come to pass, in despite of all opposition that contrary powers can make against them: *for none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?* And as none can withstand his power, so none can avoid his counsels, or control his purposes: for *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord*[o]. But *the counsel of the Lord*, saith David, *standeth for ever: and the thoughts of his heart to all generations*[p]. And thus it standeth against all opposition and contrivances of men: for *there are many devices in man's heart, but the counsel of the*

[m] Eph. i. 11. [n] Isa. x. 5. [o] Prov. xxi. 30. [p] Psalm xxxiii. 11.

Lord, that shall stand [q]. And all the skill wherewith any understanding creature is or can be endued, all the devices and projects of men's hearts, are as subject unto his incomprehensible wisdom, and the counsel of his will, as the life, being, and motion of natural things. Which subjection doth no way deprive them of all liberty and freedom in consulting, devising, and projecting, but only of power to appoint such success as they please to their own projects and devices. And the more ample we allow the sphere of any creature's liberty to be in devising and projecting, the more admirable doth the counsel of the Most High appear, in directing and ordering its free courses to such ends as he appoints.

Now these ends God accomplishes sometimes by common and ordinary means, sometimes by means wholly miraculous, and sometimes by such as are not wholly miraculous, but have something extraordinary in them.

First, sometimes by common and ordinary means, as when the diligent hand getteth riches, and slothfulness and negligence brings men to poverty: when the proud and ambitious fall into a snare, which entangles them in destruction, and the meek, the humble and patient inherit the earth. These means commonly produce such ends, yet not without success from God, who sometimes is pleased to hinder their production, for reasons best known to himself. So the Son of Sirach hath observed, *Prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches, come of the Lord* [r]. The last of which he thus explains in the foregoing verses, 11, 12: *There is one that laboureth, and taketh pains, and maketh haste, and is so much the more behind. Again, there is another that is slow, and hath need of help, wanting ability, and full of poverty; yet the eye of the Lord looketh upon him for good, and setteth him up from his low estate.* In these common things (particularly in ploughing, sowing, and harvest, &c.) we do not attribute to God so much as we ought to do: and one reason of it is, that we either are not conversant in the holy Scriptures, or do not mind them when we read them. And "the often repetition of the words of life (as an excellent man of our own long ago observed) without due reverence and attention to them, breeds an insensibility or deadness in men's souls."

[q] Prov. xix. 21. [r] Ecclus. xi. 14.

II. Which is so true, that though God sometimes produces the ends he designs (as I observed in the second place) by such means as are wholly miraculous, yet men's souls continue benumbed and stupified, unless they seriously consider, and lay them to heart. For thus he often ruled among the stubborn Jews: whom he seems to have chosen to be a theatre of his providence, in them to give a demonstration unto all the nations of the world, and to all following generations, of his power ruling every where. Thus he delivered them out of the hand of Pharaoh by an outstretched arm (as Moses speaks). Thus he passed them through the Red sea; thus he fed and maintained them in the wilderness; and at last brought them into Canaan, by a continued succession of wonders wrought by his mighty power among them, that *all the ends of the earth might fear him.*

III. But sometimes he works his ends by a middle sort of means or causes, such as are not perfectly miraculous, but yet have something extraordinary in them.

When second causes are not proportionable to their effects, when they produce things unexpected, and which seem altogether improbable, when lesser things prevail over greater, weaker overthrow the strength of those that seemed in all human judgment to be far mightier; here is something that is very extraordinary, something that is remarkable, a marvellous hand of God, though nothing, perhaps, perfectly miraculous. Read the story of Esther and Mordecai, and observe how they prevailed against the potent interest and dreadful project of Haman, (in which the whole empire was engaged,) and you will find such a concurrence of strange things as will convince you there was a wonderful hand of God in it. Every one of those occurrences apart may seem usual and ordinary; as that king Ahasuerus could not sleep, and that he called for a book to divert him rather than instruments of music; and that they brought the chronicles of the kingdom rather than any other book, and that they read there where Mordecai's good deeds were recorded, but had been forgotten by him; and that Haman should just then come into the court, when the king inquired what had been done for Mordecai, and should himself unwittingly contrive the greatest honour to be put upon him, and appointed to be the instrument of it; these

and all the rest, considered severally and singly, alone by themselves, cannot be called extraordinary; but take them all together, in their entire frame and composure, it is such as cannot be ascribed to any but his workmanship, who created all things by an astonishing artifice.

Thus are things that seem unlikely brought to pass by the secret counsel of God, against the most powerful interest, contrivances, and combinations that can be raised upon earth.

And of this sort were those two great providences of God, for which we bless him this day; and are met here together to celebrate the remembrance of them publicly with our thankful acknowledgments.

First, the happy deliverance of king James the First, and the three estates of this realm, from the most traitorous and bloody intended massacre by gunpowder.

Secondly, the happy arrival of his present majesty on this day for the deliverance of our church and nation.

The former of these was a deliverance so wonderful, if it be considered in all its circumstances, that it can hardly be paralleled in any human story. I will mention but these two things:

First, the inevitableness of our danger according to human reason.

Secondly, the marvellous manner of its discovery and prevention.

I. In the former of these there are two circumstances which show the intended destruction was inevitable, if God by an extraordinary providence had not interposed to prevent it.

They are, the secresy of its contrivance, and the persons by whom it was contrived and managed.

1. As to the secresy of the contrivance, it was so great, that the conspirators themselves boasted of it in the letter which discovered all, wherein were these words: "They shall receive a terrible blow this parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them." For so secret was the design, that though it had been long working, yet it lay concealed, without the least inkling of it, till within twelve hours of its intended execution. It was a work of darkness, framed under ground, where no eye (but God's) could see them. They buried their counsel in the depth of the earth, and bound themselves likewise by the most

sacred ties never to disclose, directly or indirectly, by word or circumstance, the matter propounded to them to keep secret; nor desist from the execution thereof, unless the rest should give leave.

Thus every man swore that entered into this conspiracy, by the blessed Trinity, and by the sacrament, which then they received.

2. After this it was not likely they should either disclose it, or desist from it; if we consider, secondly, the persons engaged in it; who were men of desperate resolution, as well as of desperate principles. They were all inspired with a false religious zeal, spurred on by a fancy that they were about an action meritorious, whereby they should highly serve God and his catholic church: which so hardened their hearts, that he who was first apprehended was not so much as abashed, nor expressed the least sign of trouble, but only for this, that he had not done the execution. When the rest also came to suffer for this treason they did not repent of it, nor beg pardon, unless upon this condition, that the pope and the church should declare it a sin: which I do not find they have done to this day.

Now how could men of such principles and resolution relent or think of going back, when they certainly believed they were set on work by God, and were warranted by his will, and infallibly guided by his chief minister to bring the greatest glory to God, and to advance his religion? These and the like advantages made the discovery of this conspiracy so unlikely, that they were fully assured in their own minds of the success.

II. And yet, now behold how this work of darkness was brought to light even by themselves, for it could no otherways be discovered; and that it should be discovered by them is little short of a miracle. For you have heard how they were bound by a solemn oath not to give the least intimation of it, directly or indirectly, by word or by circumstance. And yet so it was, that one of them, who was willing to work such a public mischief, had a desire to secure a private friend from the danger. And this against his own intention, against his resolution, against his oath, as well as against his interest: nay, and against the judgment of their oracle, (F. Garnet, the Jesuit,) who had settled this point in a deliberate answer to this question

proposed to him, whether the innocent (that is, those of their religion) might be destroyed with the guilty, (that is, with those of ours,) when the good that would come thereby would abundantly compensate their loss? Unto which he gave this resolution, That they might; nay, that it would be a thing of great merit, if thereby some great benefit would be procured to the catholics [a]. Notwithstanding all which contrary obligations, one of them opened a little crevice whereby there was a way made to look into this work of hellish darkness.

This most certainly was the extraordinary hand of God, and ought to be so acknowledged by us. It was not extraordinary, indeed, that one of them should admonish an honourable friend of a danger, unless it were in this, that there should be so much good nature left in the breast of a man who had consented to the ruin of his country. But without question this was extraordinary, that a man under such sacred ties of the strictest secresy, should give the smallest notice of a danger, and that he should express his mind in such terms as gave apprehensions of some unusual hidden and unseen danger, and (lastly) that the mind of the king should be awakened to apprehend a danger by some blast of gunpowder.

These things ought to be ascribed to that most watchful providence of God whereof I have been discoursing, which sometimes in an extraordinary manner disappoints the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. To this alone the king and the whole kingdom ascribe it in that act of parliament which is appointed to be read in all parish churches this day; wherein they acknowledge, God was pleased, by inspiring the king's most excellent majesty with a divine spirit, to interpret some dark phrases of a letter, above and beyond all ordinary construction, miraculously to discover this hidden treason, not many hours before the appointed time for the execution.

They call it miraculous in a large sense, because it was extraordinary, wonderful, and amazing, as miraculous events are.

And therefore those protestants who would entitle a great

[a] [See the earl of Northampton's speech in the official narrative, or "True and perfect relation of the proceedings against the late traitor," &c., published by Barker, the king's printer, 4to. Lond. 1606; and the speech of sir E. Coke, in Howell's State Trials, vol. ii. col. 229.]

statesman to the discovery have justly been thought to have a spice of atheism in their breasts, as a great man observed who lived in those days. They would have nothing (saith he) imputed to God, whose hand was so visible in this discovery, that it could not be denied, but by ascribing it to an oracle of intelligence in those times; who they say (without any other authority for it but their own) knew of this conspiracy long before, and let it go on, because he could catch them when he pleased.

But as this is for private men to give the lie to the whole kingdom, king and all, so it is to rob God of the glory of his marvellous works; and therein to be worse than heathens, who ascribed such strange events to some unknown god, or to the goddess Fortune, rather than think there was nothing but human contrivance in them. Far be it from any of us to entertain such a thought, which can spring from nothing but an unwillingness to believe that doctrine of providence which Nebuchadnezzar himself here proclaims to all the world, when he saith, *He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,* &c.

Nor is the providence of God less apparent in that other great mercy for which this day is become memorable, as might be shown in all the foregoing particulars. But let it suffice to remember you in general, that when the design of destroying our religion and liberties had been laid with great secresy, and carried on with such subtlety for many years, that our foot was in the snare before we perceived that it was laid for us; when the nation had been so deluded by fair promises and by their own credulity, that the danger wherein we were did not appear till we knew not how to avoid it: when our Romish adversaries had gotten such an absolute power over us, that it emboldened them to break through all restraints of law and every other obligation. Then, when we were in these straits, God was pleased to raise up the spirit of our present sovereign to enterprise our deliverance, and with the hazard of his own person to endeavour our preservation.

And as nothing could discourage him in this undertaking (but though he was driven back by a tempest at his first setting out, he calmly pursued his resolution, trusting in that Almighty Providence unto which he had committed himself): so

he found all things in the issue succeed much beyond all expectation. God turned the hearts of the whole realm to favour his design so far as to wish prosperity to him in his voyage hither. And he turned the winds also to be so favourable, that if they had been absolutely at his own disposal, he could not have commanded them to be more obsequious to him than he found them. For when he was brought to our coast by a strong gale in a very speedy course, and had overshot his port, the wind changed immediately and brought him back to his desired haven. These are but a few of those wonderful things that concurred to his safe landing here on this day eight years, without any opposition; and made him appear like a hand out of a cloud to rescue us from our eminent danger; being so befriended from above, that with a handful of men in comparison he struck such a terror into his enemies, that they melted before him as the wax before the fire, and were scattered as the dust before the wind. He was received every where with the joyful acclamations of the people, and in a short time placed peaceably upon the throne of these kingdoms.

Thus God dashed in a moment the projects that had been forming nobody knows how many years. Their long laid designs miscarried on a sudden, when they thought nothing could hinder the execution. A deliverer was sent unexpectedly to us when we were ready to perish, and without any contrivance of ours we saw all the contrivances of those that hated us utterly broken in pieces.

This we must acknowledge was brought about by the singular providence of God, who, when we were left in very great confusion, wrought things beyond our hopes into the happy settlement we now enjoy. We cannot ascribe such a wonderful revolution of affairs to mere human force, which was very small; but to the omnipotent hand of God, whose *kingdom*, saith the psalmist, *ruleth over all:* and who *scattereth the proud* (as the blessed virgin speaks in her song) *in the imaginations of their heart; putting down the mighty from their seats, and exalting them of low degree*[s].

Of which doctrine great use may and ought to be made, both by them whom God hath thus wonderfully defeated, and by ourselves, whom he hath preserved from their wicked contrivances.

[s] Luke i. 51, 52.

To the former, another holy woman hath given most excellent counsel in her song, *Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken; and they that stumbled are girt with strength*[t].

But we ourselves are most concerned to make a right use of what hath been said; and therefore I say no more to others, but apply myself to those who enjoy the benefit of these great deliverances which God hath vouchsafed to us.

I.

And first, we should all learn to live in a constant sense of God, and of his overruling providence; and accordingly in all our affairs, whether public or private, to have a regard to him, to acknowledge him, and to put our whole trust in him: considering that he governs the world, and governs it according to his wise will and pleasure. His eyes behold all the concernments of the sons of men: nothing comes to pass but what he effects or permits among them. He effects and permits nothing but out of wise, holy, and excellent ends; and whatsoever ends he absolutely purposes, those he will certainly accomplish. And therefore in all our ways, we ought, as I said, to have a respect unto him, and commit ourselves and undertakings unto the direction of his good providence: and above all things take care that we be found in such courses as he approves, and we may rationally hope he will favour and bless. For there is not a greater comfort in the world than this doctrine, if we render ourselves capable of the favour of his good providence. Which is, by endeavouring that our ways may be so pleasing to God, that we may humbly expect he will succeed and prosper them; unless he intend some greater good to us by the disappointment.

II.

That is the next use we ought to make of this doctrine; to take the strictest care that we never so much as design, much less undertake any thing, but what we know is agreeable to God's most holy will, and upon which we may look for his blessing.

For though he may permit sinners to do evil, and for the

[t] 1 Sam. ii. 3, 4.

present to work their own ends by it; yet, as this is no excuse to those sinners, so it will prove no advantage to them in the issue: nay, he often dashes all their hopes, and spoils all their projects in a moment, when they little expect it. But if we *delight ourselves in the Lord, and do good* (as the psalmist speaks, xxxvii. 3, 4.) *he will give us the desires of our heart:* or make even disappointments to prove advantageous to us, by that good Providence which knows how to work all things for the good of those that love him. And on the other side, whatsoever mischief wicked men devise against us, he will either wholly put it by, or let it proceed so far only as to make his wisdom appear in their defeat; or let it succeed to produce the greatest good to those that fear him.

We must live therefore in the fear and love of God, in dutiful obedience to our sovereign and to the laws; and be just, and charitable, and kind one to another. For in these and such like things we are sure we fulfil the will of God, and therefore may promise ourselves to be favoured by his Almighty Providence.

III.

Unto whom we are bound to be very thankful for the prosperous issues and events of all good designs in the world, whether of our own or other men; and for the defeating of all wicked contrivances; and more particularly those wherein the public safety and tranquillity is concerned; especially such singular providences of God as we this day commemorate.

If God demonstrate his providence in any thing here in this world, (and I have proved he shows it in all things,) he exercises it in the governing, defending, and protecting of public persons and societies. And never was there a more visible appearance of the Divine Providence over a kingdom than in the discovery and prevention of the gunpowder treason, and in the late defeat which he unexpectedly gave to the same conspirators against our religion and liberties. Concerning both which deliverances we may say, as the psalmist doth in another case, *They imagined a mischievous device, which they were not able to perform. They travailed with iniquity, they conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. They made a pit, and digged it, and are fallen into the pit which they made.* For the event of the gunpowder conspiracy, by the

merciful providence of the Almighty, proved the discloser of it to be a false prophet, and to have spoken presumptuously, when he said in his letter, "that God and man had concurred to punish the iniquity of those times" by that blow which they intended. The blow, blessed be God, fell upon themselves; and they suffered the just punishment of their own iniquities. In the snare which they laid was their own foot taken, and they fell by their own wickedness; but we escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare was broken, and we were delivered.

So that I may say as king James did upon this occasion, "Whereas they thought to extirpate us and our memory, their infamous memory shall by this means remain to the end of the world." Upon the one part, and upon the other, God's great and merciful deliverance of his anointed, and of us all, shall remain in never dying records; and the same God grant, that it may be engraven in marble tables of thankfulness in our hearts.

IV.

But we must not express our gratitude merely in rendering praise and thanksgiving unto the Author of our deliverances; but in the faithful improvement of them also to his glory: by the sincere love and practice of that holy religion, which hath been so often in such a marvellous manner preserved, and still is continued to us.

A religion which teaches us to worship God most purely, and to believe all things that he hath revealed unto us; to honour and obey the king also most conscientiously, next to God: for it acknowledges no superior to him in these his realms and dominions, nor will let us believe that anybody can dispense with the duty we owe him. A religion which abhors private conspiracies and rebellion, as much as it doth heresies and schisms; which leads us in the way of the truly catholic church of Christ; which doth not allow us to do any evil for the obtaining the greatest good. In short, a religion which is wholly built upon the undoubted word of God, and not upon the uncertain traditions of men.

Unto this therefore let us adhere with a steadfast affection and unshaken fidelity. Let us preserve this most carefully,

which hath been wonderfully preserved by God. And there is no way to preserve it like a sincere practice of that piety which it teacheth us: in which let us endeavour to grow more and more, and be quickened to it by these two motives.

First, that the work of reformation itself was at first effected by an extraordinary providence of God, through mean and weak instruments; when many greater persons, who wished for a reformation, thought it impossible to be brought about.

Secondly, that it hath been here among us in as extraordinary a manner preserved, by the same Almighty providence whereby it was wrought. So our forefathers have testified unto us, who saw this day which God himself made memorable by the marvellous deliverance which he vouchsafed to them. And so we ourselves are able to testify, who have again seen his salvation upon this very day; which he hath made anew to be a day of praise to him and blessing to us.

Let us be afraid of provoking so gracious and bountiful a Benefactor by obstinate disobedience to his holy laws, which he hath bound upon us by such endearing obligations. Let us cheerfully do his will, who hath done for us according to our heart's desire. This was the end for which God vouchsafed such wonderful deliverances unto Israel as are recorded in Psalm cv., *that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws.* So that Psalm concludes; and the very same, no doubt, God expects from us, who ought to charge ourselves with these two things.

First, to preserve the memory of what God hath done for us, for *he hath so done his marvellous works, that they might be had in remembrance,* as the psalmist speaks [u].

And secondly, to consider, that then we remember them as we ought, when we *remember his commandments to do them.* Then we may have a good hope that the Lord, who *hath been mindful of us, will still bless us, he will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great* [x]. For *the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children: to*

[u] Psalm cxi. 4. [x] Psalm cxv. 12, 13.

such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them [y].

Which the God of all grace give us hearts sincerely to resolve and study for the sake of Christ Jesus: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

[y] Psalm ciii. 17, 18.

A LETTER

OF THE

BISHOP OF ELY TO HIS CLERGY,

BEFORE HIS PRIMARY VISITATION.

1692.

A LETTER

OF

THE BISHOP OF ELY

TO HIS CLERGY

My dear brethren,

THAT the Visitation I shortly intend may be more easy to myself, and more profitable to my diocese, I have thought fit to desire a few things of you beforehand.

I. It would be a good preparation to the inquiries I am then to make, if you would call yourselves to an account how you have performed the several parts of the duty incumbent on you; and if you find you have been negligent, to resolve upon and immediately begin a sincere reformation. I am not able to mention them all in a short letter, but the very first thing in the Book of Common Prayer deserves to be seriously considered: where you are enjoined "to say daily the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly," &c. It is possible, I am sure, to observe one part of this injunction, if you cannot observe the other; that is, if you cannot procure a congregation to meet daily in the church, yet you may, and therefore ought, to read the service of the church in your own families, either "privately or openly, not being hindered by sickness, or some other urgent cause," which cannot happen every day. This, if solemnly performed, would be a powerful means to preserve an awful sense of God continually upon your minds, and to make "yourselves and your families wholesome examples to the flock of Christ," as you promised to endeavour at your ordination.

Read over the vows you then made, and the charge which was then given you, and examine yourselves faithfully how you have observed them; which would save me the labour either of mentioning all other particulars of your duty here, or making long exhortations to you when I meet you at the visit-

[a] Rubric 2, 3. after the preface concerning the service of the church

ation, all being comprised in the promises you made at that time, if they be distinctly pondered.

If I had therefore but one request to make to you, it should be this; that every morning the first thing you do, you would call to mind that you are the ministers of Jesus Christ, who have made such and such promises to him when you were admitted into his service: which if you grant me, it could not fail to have a great effect upon your hearts and lives. For how could any man neglect to preach the word of God diligently, to catechise the children, visit the sick, reconcile differences, and all the rest, with due care and fidelity; when he had it always in his mind that this is his business, and that he promised to God before his people that he would make this his business, and conscientiously attend it? You cannot think of appearing before our Lord and Master with any confidence, if you have not made good your word to him.

II. I am loath to suppose that any who have sworn allegiance to their present majesties neglect to observe the monthly fasts appointed by their authority; to implore God's blessing upon their persons, and the prosperity of their arms. But there being reports that some are guilty of such scandalous omissions in several parts of this kingdom; I beseech you to take care that there be no such complaint made to me of any in my diocese: and let me not find that any omit the use of that form of prayer which is enjoined on that occasion: after which I will make a solemn inquiry, and am commanded so to do.

III. I hope you received, two years ago, a letter of his majesty's to the bishop of London, ordered to be communicated to both provinces, of Canterbury and York. Wherein he requires all the bishops to keep a strict watch over their clergy, and more particularly to order them to preach frequently against those sins and vices which are most prevailing in this realm: as namely, against blasphemy, swearing, and cursing, against perjury, against drunkenness, and against profanation of the Lord's day. And, in those Lord's days on which such sermons are preached, to read also to the people such statutes of this realm as are provided against that vice which is their subject on that day: which statutes were printed together with that letter, and ordered to be transmitted to every parish in both provinces. I most earnestly entreat you to observe these

injunctions; for they were not intended for that year only, but to continue till we saw the blessed effects of them in a hearty reformation.

And for your better direction in this matter, let me desire you to observe this method. On the Sunday sevennight before the assizes, it will be most proper to read the act of parliament against perjury, and to preach upon that subject. On the second Sunday in May it will be seasonable to read the act for observation of the Lord's day, and exhort your parishioners to the religious observation of it. On the first Sunday in Advent, read the act against blasphemy, swearing, and cursing, and preach against those sins. On the fourth Sunday in Lent, against the sins of adultery and fornication. It hath been intended that homilies be provided for all these days; but till they be, let every one furnish himself with sermons upon these heads, and continue this course from year to year.

IV. There have been such foul practices in clandestine marriages, that they produced lately a bill in parliament, which if it had passed into an act would have fallen very heavily upon us all, and cast no small reproach upon us, for standing in need of such severe means for our reformation. Which if we would avoid, let us observe the canons of the church exactly, and there will be no such abuses to be corrected by anybody but ourselves alone. I resolve by God's grace to observe that part of them which concerns me, by proceeding against him as a person suspended for three years *ipso facto* who shall offend against the sixty-second canon. I hope you will as carefully observe your part, which is, (as you may there read,) not to marry any persons without asking in the church, or such a license as the law allows; and at no hour but between eight and twelve in the forenoon, nor in any place but in the church or chapel where one of the parties dwell; and not without consent of parents or guardians, if the parties to be married be under the age of one and twenty years.

Let no person, under the colour of any peculiar liberty or privilege belonging to the church or chapel, presume to do otherwise; for the penalty of suspension for three years will, notwithstanding fall upon him, as he may learn by the next canon sixty-three, which I am resolved to see put in execution.

V. And now let me prevail with you to take some pains,

where you find it necessary, with your churchwardens, to convince them of the obligation that is laid upon them, by a solemn oath, to make a faithful answer to my inquiries; which shall be as few as may be, that they may be the better able to give satisfaction to every one of them.

It would be a great comfort to me, as well as credit to this church, to find the usual answer true: but pray them to consider what a guilt they bring upon their souls, if they say, All things are well, and as they ought to be; when they know in their consciences that many things are quite otherwise. Beseech them, as they love their own souls, not to increase the sins of the nation, when we are endeavouring to reform them.

VI. Particularly press them earnestly, and assist them to present to me all those who profess to live in the communion of our church, and are of age, and yet neglect to receive the holy communion at least three times in the year, as by law they are bound to do. For such people not only *wrong their own souls*, as the wise man speaks, but bring a great scandal upon our church and religion. For what other Christians are there in the world who suffer their members to live without any solemn regard to their blessed Lord and Master who died for them? As all those do who never commemorate his wonderful love by receiving the holy sacrament of his body and blood. For the Lord's sake let this gross neglect be amended.

And let me prevail with you to put in practice the first rubric before the communion office, which directs all those who intend to partake of the holy communion to signify their names to the curate, at least some time the day before; that he may both know what quantity of bread and wine is necessary to be provided for communicants, and also discourse with those young persons who may need instruction, and admonish those who are notorious and open evil livers, or have any way injured their neighbours, (as the next rubric directs,) to abstain from the Lord's table till they have openly declared their sincere purpose of amendment, and made satisfaction for the wrong they have done. This would be the more easy to perform, if as many as intend to communicate would be persuaded (as I hope without much difficulty they may) to come to the public prayers, which I beseech you never fail to have in the church on the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays before the communion, however you may want a congregation at other times; and in

great and market towns, if not in others, I hope you may be able to keep up monthly communions, as well as prayers on all Wednesdays and Fridays.

VII. There is another thing, in which both you and the churchwardens are concerned, of which I beseech you due care may be taken, which is, to bring in to me, or to the archdeacon at his next visitation, a terrier of the glebe lands, meadows, gardens, orchards, and all other things belonging to your parsonage or vicarage, with an account of any customs of tithings which have been used among you, that so the maintenance provided for God's ministers by our pious ancestors may be preserved.

It is so great a sin and shame to let those buildings which they erected for the service of God, and for our commodious habitation, run to decay, that I must desire you likewise to inform me truly whether both the church and chancel of your parish, and also your own houses and outhouses, be in good repair. It makes my heart ache, I assure you, to think that any of us should so far degenerate from our worthy progenitors as not to uphold those fabrics in a good condition which they raised from the ground with great cost and charges.

Let us all endeavour to redeem ourselves from this infamy.

It would be very useful also to have an inventory under your and the churchwardens' hands of all the utensils belonging to your church, which I desire you to deliver unto me, or unto my archdeacon at his next visitation, to be kept in the register's office: of this the archbishop hath required me to take an account.

VIII. And now let me beseech your conscientious care in some things which concern myself as well as you.

I. It is my duty to confirm such as are prepared for it; which that it may be done to edification, and all disorders and crowds may then be avoided, I pray you to take notice that I will confirm none but such whose names shall be given to me in writing by you the ministers of the several parishes from whence they come, with a certificate under your hands that you have examined them, and find them not only able to repeat the words of the church catechism, but also sensible of the solemn vow which was made in their names at their baptism, and desirous to renew the same themselves. Let it be your endeavour therefore to dispose the young people of your parish unto this, by presenting to them the necessity and the benefit thereof.

And, for the better performance of it, I design to confirm as frequently as I am able, not only in my visitation, (when we have so much other business, that I desire those only who are near then to attend me,) but at other times, and in such churches as I shall be advised to be most convenient, where those in the neighbourhood who are fit to be confirmed may be appointed to resort unto me.

II. Giving holy orders is another weighty care of mine, about which I cannot be too solicitous, and wherein I must beg your assistance. And first, I entreat you not to set your hands to the testimonial of any person, but upon your own certain knowledge of his life and conversation for the space of three years next before, as the XXXIVth canon requires. It would much conduce to restrain young men from vice, if they had no hope to gain a testimonial of their good life and behaviour from the easiness or civility of their neighbours, or any other means, but merely from their own known virtue. Make a conscience of this, and it will go a great way to reform the church. And secondly, do not send any person to me with an empty title, for I will admit none to orders upon a curacy, unless it be a competency to be continued till he be otherways provided for. And lastly, let me desire you to signify unto such as you find desirous to be put into holy orders, that I expect they come to me, or certify me of their intentions a month, at least, before Ordination Sunday; that I may be able to give notice of it to the parish or place where they live, that if they have any impediment to object why they should not be admitted, I may have timely information of it.

For there cannot be too much care taken that the flock of Christ be not committed into the hands of bad men, but such may be set over them as will *watch for their souls, and fleeing youthful lusts will follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that out of a pure heart call upon the Lord*[q].

Unto whose grace and blessing I do most heartily commend you and your labours.

April 20, 1692.

SYMON ELIENSIS.

[q] Heb. xiii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 22.

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

REPRESENTED TO

THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF ELY.

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

REPRESENTED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF ELY.

DEAR BRETHREN,

To shorten my own labour and your attendance at my approaching visitation, I send you this little treatise beforehand, which may serve instead of the exhortation which is wont to be made on that occasion. You will read it, I hope, with as serious consideration as you would have heard it, had it been spoken with due attention. By which means you will receive a greater benefit than you could have done the other way; for you may read that often, and imprint it in your minds, which you could have heard but once, and might have slipped out of your memory.

You see by the title of it, that it treats of the duties which belong to that function in which it hath pleased the Most High to do you the honour to employ you. A function so truly noble, that it is not in my power to set forth the dignity of it. For the blessed apostle St. Paul thought it so great an honour to be made a Christian, that he thought no words too lofty to express the dignity of their state, which he calls not only our *high calling*[a], but our *heavenly calling in Christ Jesus*[b]. Which I cannot think of, but it makes me reflect, what an honour then it is to be made a minister of Jesus Christ, whose business it is to bring others into this glorious state of Christianity, and to breed them up and keep them in it.

What preferment is there comparable to this, to be constituted a servant and a minister of the King of Glory, a steward of the heavenly mysteries, an ambassador for Christ, a labourer in his vineyard or harvest; which implies indeed great pains, but carries in it also the great honour of sowing the seed of eternal life in men's souls.

[a] Philipp. iii. 14. [b] Heb. iii. 1.

and cultivating, that is, preparing and making them fit to be carried into Christ's heavenly kingdom? I do not name all the places in the holy writings where you find yourselves described under these characters, because you cannot but be well acquainted with them. I shall only add, that we do not assume too much to ourselves, when we call ourselves the Clergy, i. e. God's portion or inheritance, being peculiarly separated to his service, as our famous Mr. Mede hath most judiciously observed, Discourse XXXVI, p. 270[c]. For the prime ministers of our Lord Christ are called by himself the *angels of the churches*[d] over which they presided. And therefore St. Chrysostom[e], in his third book Περὶ Ἱερωσύνης, feared not to say, "that the priesthood is a dignity raised far above all the honours of this world, and approaching to the angelical glory."

Which if it be duly weighed, and laid to heart, we can never cease to give God thanks, who hath advanced us to such a noble station, nor be unmindful of the service he expecteth from us; but both study all the duties belonging to it, and endeavour to perform them with a spirit suitable to our function.

What those duties are, it is the principal business of this small treatise to lay before you. And with what spirit they ought to be performed, I shall, in the conclusion of it, briefly admonish you. These two will comprehend all that I have to recommend to your consideration. For there is no necessity, sure, to prove that they whom God hath set apart to himself for a peculiar service, and therefore have a special relation to him, and have received a special favour from him, have a singular obligation to do all they can to express their gratitude to him, by discharging faithfully that great trust which he hath committed to them.

[c] [Works, vol. i. fol. Lond. 1664.] [d] Rev. i. 20. [e] [Tom. i. p. 383.]

PART I.

NOW as to the duties which are incumbent upon the ministers of Christ, I shall first treat of those which are to be performed in private, and then of those which are of public concernment.

I. The private duties, being to qualify them for the right discharge of all public offices, are principally the study of the holy Scriptures and prayer.

We profess at our ordination, that we are "persuaded the holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for everlasting salvation," &c., and we declare that we are "determined out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to our charge, &c." Which supposes that above all things we ought to apply ourselves to the serious study of these holy books, that there we may learn our own duty, and the duty of those whom we are to instruct in the Christian religion. And accordingly a solemn exhortation is made to those who are to be admitted to the order of priesthood, to consider how studious they ought to be in reading, and weighing, and learning the Scriptures; "that they may wax riper and stronger in their ministry." And more than this, we promise before God and his church, that we "will be diligent herein;" which no man can think of if he have any conscience, and live in the neglect of this sacred study. For after we have given our faith to God and to his church to be careful in this matter, we seal it by receiving the holy communion of Christ's body and blood. Which one would think should be of mighty force (and will be so if duly weighed) to stir us up to this part of our duty; that we may not be guilty of the breach of such solemn promises as were made to God at his altar.

And here it may be proper briefly to remember you, that this is so conformable to the doctrine and practice of the ancient church, that Theophylact (upon John x. 1, &c.[a]) saith,

[a] [Tom. i. p. 644 B.]

"The Scriptures are the door by which the true pastor enters; and that he is a thief who comes not in by these. Οὐ γὰρ χρᾶται ταῖς γραφαῖς μάρτυσιν, &c., 'for he doth not use the Scriptures as witnesses' and vouchers for what he says. By these," saith he, "we are brought to God: these will not permit wolves to enter; they keep out heretics, placing us in safety and security: these give us right notions of all things wherein we desire to be informed."

And therefore, my brethren, apply yourselves devoutly to the study of these divine books, or rather of these books which will make you divine. For so they were called in the ancient Christian language, *deificos libros*, and *deificas Scripturas*, and *instrumenta deifica*, (as Ælianus, proconsul of Africa, calls them in Optatus, *lib. i.*[b]) Which name the very heathen had learnt, it was so common, as appears by the inquiries they made after Bibles to burn them: this being an usual question in the examination of the martyrs, *Libros deificos habetis?* Which we should look upon therefore (as they did) as an invaluable treasure: and *let the word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom*, as the apostle St. Paul speaks, Coloss. iii. 16. Such wisdom as will not indeed make us philosophers or rhetoricians, &c. (to use the words of Justin Martyr,) ἀλλὰ παιδεύουσα ποιεῖ τοὺς θνητοὺς ἀθανάτους, &c, "but gives such instructions, that of mortals it makes us immortal; of men it makes us godlike; from the earth it translates us above the top of Olympus." *Exhort. 2. ad Græcos, p.* 40[c].

And the very same in effect the holy Scriptures speak concerning themselves, when they tell us they are able to make such a man as Timothy was *wise unto salvation; being profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*[d]. Which should move us to follow his exhortation in the foregoing Epistle, *Give attendance to reading, &c. Meditate on these things; give yourselves wholly to them; that your profiting may appear to all*[e], or in all things.

For this end you must join with this such other studies as tend to lead you into a right understanding of the holy Scrip-

[b] [Cap. 27. Opp. p. 23.]
[c] [P. 5 A.]
[d] 2 Tim. iii. 15–17.
[e] 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15.

tures. Of this you were admonished also at your ordination, when you promised "to be diligent in reading the holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and of the flesh." And chiefly you are to study to understand the language in which the holy Scriptures were originally delivered to the church; especially the New Testament, in which we ought to be as perfect as lawyers are in Littleton's Tenures. For this is our standing rule of faith and manners; in which if we be not well skilled ourselves, we shall never be able to direct others. And next to this, it is necessary to study diligently some approved commentator upon the Bible; especially Dr. Hammond on the New Testament: which is not only to be read over, but to be digested, so that you may be masters of the sense of our Saviour and his holy apostles. I shall not launch out into any further directions about the study of the fathers, and the church history, which are necessary to accomplish a complete divine; for that would swell this book to a much greater bulk than I design it should have.

To conclude this section, let Ezra, that restorer of religion among the Jews, be your pattern; who tells us himself, that he was *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*[f]. Such we should be, well versed in the holy Scriptures, especially in the laws of Christ; so as to have them ready at hand for our purpose. And in the tenth verse he tells us how he came to deserve this character. First, he had *prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord*, i. e. to understand it: and then, secondly, it follows, he prepared his heart *to do it;* that is, to act according to his knowledge, and so, *to teach Israel statutes and judgments.*

II. Which that we may be able to do with good success, we ought, as the psalmist speaks most emphatically, to *give ourselves unto prayer*[g]. This is a duty incumbent upon all private Christians, whom our Saviour and his apostles command to *pray always*, and to *pray without ceasing*, and to *watch unto prayer*. But the ministers of Christ ought more especially to be instant and incessant in it, because they have need of a special assistance and blessing from above upon their labours to make others good Christians.

[f] Ezra vii. 6. [g] Psalm cix. 4.

Which cannot be done without the blessed presence of God's holy Spirit with us; which must constantly and earnestly be implored, to give us a right judgment in all things, to fill us with a lively sense of divine matters, and to enable us to convey it into the minds and hearts of others.

Of this also we are put in mind at our ordination; and therefore should never forget it. For in that admirable exhortation which goes before the questions to which we are to make answers, the great excellence and the great difficulty of our office is represented to us; to make us sensible "what need we have to pray earnestly for God's holy Spirit:" without which it is impossible for us to have either a will or ability to perform it as we ought. And accordingly this is one of the things which immediately after we promise to God and to his church: that we will "be diligent in prayers, as well as in reading the holy Scriptures."

Let us therefore, as it follows in the forenamed exhortation, "pray continually to God the Father by the mediation of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost." For as the holy Scriptures are *θύρα*, the 'door,' whereby the good Shepherd enters to the performance of his office, as Theophylact, I observed before, expounds our Saviour's words[h]; so the Holy Spirit of God, in the opinion of the same father, is the *θυρωρός* mentioned in the third verse of that chapter, which we translate the *porter*, or the *doorkeeper*, who opens the door for us, and lets us into the sense of the holy Scriptures. So his words are: "Because, by the holy Spirit the Scriptures being opened and understood, Christ is made known to us; therefore it is called the doorkeeper." Ἐν ᾧ ὡς Πνεύματι σοφίας, &c, "by whom, he being the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, the Scriptures are opened unto us: and by that means our Lord the good Shepherd enters to take us into his care and conduct."

To be strangers then to this holy duty is to be strangers to God, and to all that is good: who, as *he is nigh to all those that call upon him faithfully*, so he withdraws himself from those who neglect him. Of which we cannot be guilty, if we remember in what need we stand, above all other men, of his blessed presence with us, to guide, and strengthen, and further

[h] John x. 1.

us in the discharge of our weighty trust for his honour, and the salvation of men. This will stir us up not only to ask and seek, but knock also, (as our Saviour speaks,) that is, pray with the greatest importunity for the Holy Spirit, which our heavenly Father is more ready to give than parents are to give food to their hungry children.

Let us be awakened by the example of king David, who prevented the morning light to pray to God, and to meditate in his statutes, as he tells us Psalm cxix. 147, 148. "Though he was a man that had abundance of cares upon him, and was engaged in many wars, (as Theodoret glosses upon that place[i],) yet God still was in all his thoughts; without whose aid he durst not undertake any thing, much less hope for success in his affairs. And shall we who have no such load of business upon us roll ourselves up and down in ease, and, (as that father there speaks,) *οὐδ' ἀρχομένης ἡμέρας*, &c., not so much as in the beginning of the day offer up an hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Giver of all good things, and implore his blessing upon us?" A most stupid negligence, and an unpardonable insensibleness of our constant and most bountiful benefactor: without whom we can do nothing.

His grace and mercy we ought to seek as soon as we rise, and as often as we can in the day; retiring ourselves on purpose into our closets, to beseech him to be with us in our studies, and in our labours for the good of souls. For, as Clemens Alexandrinus speaks, (*lib. vii. Strom.*[k],) "a priest ought to be of such an heavenly spirit that *εὐχὴ μὲν αὐτῷ ὁ βίος ὅλος, καὶ ὁμίλια πρὸς Θεὸν*, 'his whole life is prayer and conversation with God.'" Which St. Basil, (in his homily upon the Martyr Julitta[l],) thinks is the apostle's meaning when he bids us *pray without ceasing:* not by putting up petitions to heaven perpetually in so many words, (for that is impossible,) *ἀλλὰ προαιρέσει μᾶλλον ψυχῆς*, &c., 'but rather by the settled disposition of our mind,' and bent of our wills towards God, (into which our prayers ought to put us and preserve us therein) and by a regular life: whereby we shall draw down still more of his grace upon us.

For this I must observe in the conclusion of this part of my

[i] [Tom. i. p. 1475.] [k] [Cap. 12. p. 875.] [l] [Tom. ii. p. 35 E.]

discourse, that careless and frigid prayers, which make no alteration in ourselves, have no effect with God. To whom we must address ourselves with such fervent and earnest desires as turn our hearts towards him, and give us such a lively sense of him as brightens and cheers our minds, knits our wills and affections to him, and makes us like him. Thus Daniel represents this duty to us, when he complains of the children of Israel, that *they did not make their prayer to the Lord their God, to turn from their iniquity, and to understand the truth* [m]. Which as it denotes their dull formality in their prayers, (which, no doubt, they continually made in their captivity,) whereby they were not converted to God, and reformed in their lives; so it implies withal that serious and devout prayer hath a power in it to turn about the heart, and give God the possession of it: which is the best way to understand the truth.

Employ therefore as much time as you can in secret prayer to God, with such affection that you may feel yourselves really bettered by it. Pray for yourselves, and pray for your flock, (that God would bless your labours among them, and pour the dew of his heavenly grace upon them,) for the whole church of Christ, yea, for all mankind. For such is the nobleness of this duty, that in the exercise of it we extend our charity to all the world, which we cannot do by any other means. It enlarges our souls into a kind of infinity and immensity in our good desires and wishes, and in the readiness of our mind to do good to every one, were it in our power.

Sect. III. Thus having briefly laid before you the private duties incumbent on the ministers of Christ, I proceed to those which are of a public concernment. And in treating of them I shall take them into consideration in that order wherein they lie in the public liturgy of our church.

Where the first thing that presents itself unto us is the Order for Morning and Evening Prayer daily throughout the year. Which is to be performed by him that "ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered." This is the standing law of this realm, and a most reasonable law it is. For who can imagine

[m] Dan. ix. 13.

that God, who so strictly enjoined the Jews to offer him a lamb every morning and every evening at the temple, and to double this sacrifice on their sabbath, doth not expect that we (who are made a peculiar people to him by far greater benefits than were conferred on them,) should offer unto him the sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving, morning and evening in our churches? All Christians from the beginning ever did it. At this day all the eastern churches, both Greek and Armenian constantly do it. I need say nothing of the practice of the Roman church; which in this matter is truly catholic. The Lutherans and Calvinists (as they are called) in Germany have their daily public offices, and full congregations. The Socinians in Poland, as Ruarus tells us, (cent. 2. epist. p. 99 [n],) had public prayers morning and evening, which lasted three quarters of an hour. Yea, the Mahometans themselves have their stated times of prayer, five times in the day. For Mahomet had so much sense as to call "prayer the pillar of religion," (as Dr. Pocock observes upon Abul-Pharagii, p. 304 [o].) "For take this away, and religion falls to the ground:" as this pillar of it will soon do, if it be not supported by public assemblies.

How they came to be so much disused among us, here in this church, except only on Sundays, it is sad to consider, and extremely to be lamented. We herein forsake the practice of all churches, and fall short of those who are not Christians. The constitutions indeed of our church are conformable to all others, and strictly enjoin that which we do not now practise. Which is a public witness against us, that we are degenerated from our first principles, and by degrees grown cold and remiss in our religion. The fault perhaps may have been very much in the people, but it is to be feared we have been to blame also, in not admonishing them of their duty, and calling upon them to assemble themselves daily to worship their blessed Lord and Saviour.

It must be allowed that in some parishes the houses are so scattered, and lie so far distant from the church, that they cannot possibly meet together daily for the public service of God. But this plea cannot with any appearance of truth be

[n] [Martini Ruari Epistt. Select. &c., 8vo, Amst. 1681.]
[o] [P. 297. ed. 4to, Oxon. 1806.]

made for all parishes, especially for market-towns; where the houses are built closer together, and not far from the place of public worship. Many are at leisure also in such parishes to attend daily, if they had hearts to do it, upon the public prayers; whatsoever may be alleged in the excuse of poor labouring people.

Therefore use your best endeavours to bring the people to a sense of their duty in this matter, and to the performance of it; where no tolerable reason can be given for the neglect of so necessary a part of our religion, and which tends so much to the honour of it, and to the glory of God. To attempt such a good thing, though you should not succeed in it, will give you great satisfaction. But whosoever considers the condition of the cities of London and Westminster, as they were formerly, and as they are now, will not despair of success. For before our unnatural civil war, I have been informed by a reverend divine, there were few churches in those cities where daily public prayers were read; and where they were, very few people to join with the minister in them. But now there are very few churches that want them, or a congregation to attend them. And though such assemblies were but thin when this first begun, a little after the happy restoration of our monarchy and church, yet I myself can witness that their numbers daily increased; insomuch that in some places there are public prayers four times a day, and good congregations, where in my memory there were none at all.

This is a great encouragement to try what may be done in other great towns, where people are not far distant from the church.

Begin with persuasions to come, at least, upon Litany days; and so by degrees they may be induced to wait upon God constantly at his house, to make their prayers and acknowledgments to him. Represent to them frequently how much the public service of God excels all that we can perform in private; because then God appears more glorious in praises, when his people join together to set them forth. Bid them mark how David and other inspired persons have in the book of Psalms stirred up the affections of the whole body of God's people, to meet together for his divine service, saying, *O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him all ye people*[q]. *O magnify*

[q] Psalm cxvii. 1.

the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together[r]. *Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints*[s]. Or, as it is in the hymn appointed every day, after the second lesson at morning prayer, *O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name*[t]. In short, instruct them that every *hallelujah* they meet withal in the holy Scriptures, or *Praise ye the Lord*, suppose public assemblies, (to which all the foregoing exhortations are directed,) where many met together for divine worship: not contenting themselves to praise God alone by themselves, but with all those who were members of the same body with them.

But if by all your endeavours you cannot bring this to pass, yet there is one thing of which I must admonish you, that I am sure is in your power. It is this, that all priests and deacons are bound by the law of this realm and of this church to say daily morning and evening prayer privately, when they cannot openly; not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause. See the first rubric in the Common-Prayer Book, after the preface, concerning the service of the church. Do not fail therefore, I beseech you, to read the daily prayers morning and evening privately in your own family; that the divine service according to law may be performed daily in every parish, though not in every church. There cannot be constantly nor commonly urgent causes, much less sickness, I hope, to hinder this; and when there is not, look upon yourselves as bound in conscience to read the prayers at home.

And when you do officiate publicly on the Lord's days, or other times in the church, let it be in such a solemn manner, that it may move the people to attend and make them in love with our prayers. There is a careless, overly way of reading them, so fast, and with such little devotion, as hath exceedingly disgraced them; and given great offence to the better sort of people among us, and hardened the bad in profaneness and irreligion. I hope none of you are guilty of this, but it becomes me to admonish you of the danger of it, and to beseech you constantly to compose yourselves with the greatest seriousness, and reverence, and affection, to perform divine service in the

[r] Psalm xxxiv. 3. [s] cxlix. 1. [t] c. 4.

church. This will keep up the majesty of our worship, and preserve it from contempt. For I can see nothing that should move those that dissent from us to call it dead and formal, but only the deadness and formality that hath appeared too often in him that officiates. Stir up yourselves therefore to officiate in every part of the divine service with a becoming gravity and deliberation; and yet with such life and affection, as may express your concern to have your petitions granted, and the word of God regarded.

Avicenna, (as he is vulgarly called,) an Arabian philosopher, hath an excellent discourse upon this subject in the third part of his Metaphysics; where having said that they who instruct the people ought to teach them forms of prayer wherein to address themselves to God, he adds this direction to them. "As a man uses to prepare himself to come to the king in purity and cleanness; with graceful language, and an humble gravity; with a comely deportment of body, ceasing from all disorderly motions there, as well as from perturbation of mind; so it is fit there should be laudable modes and forms of serving God at all times. For these do highly conduce to imprint on the minds of the people a sense of the Most High, and to confirm them in their devotion to the laws and rules of life. Which, if they were not preserved by this solemn commemoration, men would quite forget in one or two generations." Thus I find him quoted by Mr. Selden in his *Comment. in Eutychii Origines, fol.* 57. And he doth but express the sense of the ancient Christians; from whom the Mahometans derived that solemnity and seriousness which they use in their Divine service.

It is no small part of the study of priests in the present Roman church to learn how to compose their looks and gestures and voices, in the several offices which they are to perform. Which as it hath too much of the theatre in it, so that pains may all be spared by possessing our minds with a deep sense and feeling of the majesty of God to whom we speak, and of our great need of the things which we pray him to bestow upon us. This will naturally compose our countenances, and regulate the tone of our voice, and make us pronounce the prayers as gracefully as we would a petition to the greatest majesty on earth. The organs of speech indeed in several men are of a very different frame and figure; so that all cannot

speak no more than sing alike; but some more harshly, some more sweetly. Yet an awful sense of God upon our minds, and an hearty love to him, would form every man's voice to as good an accent as his natural capacity will permit.

Sect. IV. The next office in our Liturgy is The Order for the Administration of the Holy Communion; which being the highest duty of our religion, that which is most peculiarly Christian worship, the greatest care ought to be taken about the due performance of it. That is:

1. First of all you ought to invite your people to a frequent participation of it. We are not told in Scripture how oft we are to *do this* in remembrance of our Saviour; but when we consider that this is the end and intention of it, to commemorate the wonderful love of our Lord in his death and passion for our sakes, we cannot think fit to let there be a long time between one communion and another. Especially when we consider that the first Christians, it is manifest, met together every Lord's day at least to magnify the mercy of God in giving his only begotten Son to be our Redeemer, and the inconceivable love of the Son of God in making himself an offering for our sins. This they thought their great business when they assembled together; so that our assemblies never look so like Christian assemblies as when the holy communion is celebrated.

2. In order to which frequently open to your people the nature, necessity, and the great benefits of communion with Christ, and one with another, in this holy sacrament of Christ's body and blood. Answer their scruples, and remove their objections; but especially awaken them out of that lazy indifference wherein too many live, whether they live like Christians or no.

3. When the time is appointed for its administration, warn them to prepare themselves for it, and direct them how to do it; and require them who intend to partake of it to signify their names to you at least some time the day before. So the first rubric before the Order for Administering the Holy Communion requires, with great reason, because you ought to have time to do what follows:

4. If any person in your parish be a notorious evil liver, or have done any wrong to his neighbours, either by word or

deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended; you ought, having knowledge thereof, to admonish him (as the next rubric directs) to amend his naughty life, and not presume to come to the Lord's table till the congregation be satisfied of his repentance; and that he hath made such a recompense to those he hath wronged as they accept of. The like is to be done when you perceive malice and hatred to reign among any of your parish; endeavouring to bring them to a reconciliation before you suffer them to partake of the holy communion.

5. And more than this, the third rubric requires you, if these private endeavours have no effect, openly to repel such persons from the communion, if they offer themselves to receive it, who will not be reconciled nor reformed; giving notice of their obstinacy to the Ordinary within the time there prescribed.

6. In the administration of the holy communion compose yourselves to the most serious and solemn deportment, and perform every part of this most Christian service with the highest degree of devotion. So St. Justin Martyr [u] tells us, in his Second Apology, (where he gives an account of what was done in the Christian assemblies in his time,) that bread, wine and water being set before him that presided, "he sendeth up prayers and thanksgivings, ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ, 'with all his power or might.'" Which is an expression that hath been much abused by those who separate from us, to prove that no forms of prayer were used in the church in those days, but he who officiated conceived a prayer of his own as well as he was able. So they interpret that phrase ὅση δύναμις αὐτῷ· which is manifestly an expression of that earnestness of devotion with which the bishop or priest came to consecrate the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. It being a phrase very much used among the Jews when they speak of their prayers; for their ancient doctors have this saying among them, (as our excellent Mr. Thorndike observes,) "Whosoever saith Amen with all his might, the gate of the garden of Eden is opened to him:" and Maimonides describing their morning service useth the same form of speech; "The people answer, Amen, be his great name blessed for ever and ever, with all their might." See Service of God at Religious Assemblies, chap. vii [x]. To which may be added what we read in the Apostolical Constitutions; where there is a large form of

[u] [Al. Apol. i. cap. 67. p. 83.] [x] [Works, vol. i. p. 254.]

thanksgiving at the Eucharist for all God's blessings; especially in our Lord Christ, from his incarnation to his sufferings, death, and resurrection: and then it follows, "Therefore being mindful of these things which he suffered for us, we give thee thanks, O Almighty God, οὐχ' ὅσον ὀφείλομεν, ἀλλ' ὅσον δυνάμεθα[y], 'not so much as we ought, but as much as we are able.' Which exactly answers to the ὅση δύναμις, 'all the might,' in Justin Martyr, and explains the meaning of it.

But there have been so many excellent books written about the holy communion, that I will enlarge no further upon this subject.

V. In that office there is a rubric directing where the sermon is to come in; and therefore I shall in the next place say something to you concerning preaching. Which is a duty to be performed by every priest, according to the authority given to him at his ordination, in those words, "Take thou authority to preach the word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments, in the congregation where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto:" and the prayer made after the ordaining of priests, "That God's word spoken by their mouths may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain."

Now to make it thus successful a great many directions might be usefully given, concerning both the matter of sermons, and their form; their style also and manner of delivery, with distinct pronunciation, and such like: into which if I should launch out, they alone would be sufficient to fill a little book. I shall therefore only briefly desire you to consider the state and condition of your auditory, and to suit your discourses thereunto. Country people are not to be troubled with controversies and disputes, but to be plainly taught what to believe and practise.

1. Therefore endeavour to instruct and settle their minds in the principles of religion. And for this end study well the works of two late bishops of Chester: one of which (Dr. Wilkins) hath wrote a treatise of Natural Religion; and the other (Dr. Pearson) hath given a full account of the Christian, in his admirable book upon the Apostles' Creed.

2. Especially instruct them in the great fundamental article of our religion, the divinity of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and of the Holy Ghost; showing them how all our comfort is

[y] [Const. Apost. lib. viii. cap. 12. Coteler. Patr. Apost. tom. i. p. 407.]

built upon this. And truly, I look upon it as a singular providence of God, that he did not suffer those heretics who now boldly strike at this great article of our faith to start up in an ignorant age, but in a time when there are so many able men in the church to beat them down. God hath furnished us with a great number of such excellent persons as have thoroughly studied the holy Scriptures and the ancient doctors of the church; and they who have not had opportunity to make such improvement in divine knowledge furnish themselves out of their writings, which these heretics have occasioned. Particularly out of the bishop of Worcester's discourse about the Blessed Trinity [z], which is not long, but very full and satisfactory.

3. Yet I must admonish you, when you find it necessary to discourse to your people upon this subject, that you be mindful of his majesty's late injunctions [a], and not presume to invent any new ways of explaining so sublime a mystery as the holy Trinity, or use any other terms to express it, but such as the ancient Christians used, and are in the Articles of our Religion, the three Creeds, and our Liturgy. Which teach us that our blessed Saviour is the Son of God, in the highest and most proper sense of these words, by eternal generation. In like manner we are to believe that the Holy Ghost is God, proceeding from the Father and the Son. This may be evidently proved out of the Scriptures, wherein God hath thus far revealed his own most blessed nature, as well as his mind and will unto us. But how the Son is begotten of the Father, and how the Holy Ghost proceeds from both, he hath not revealed unto us, (because it is as incomprehensible as the divine essence is,) and therefore we must not adventure to say any thing about it. For though we know that "the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God in three persons," (because the holy Scriptures plainly declare the Son to be a distinct person from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from both,) yet what it is that makes the distinction of the person of the Son from the person of the Father, &c., that is not declared to us by God, who only knows it, and therefore is not to be inquired into. Accordingly the

[z] ["A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity," &c., by Edward Stillingfleet, D. D.]

[a] [A. D. 1695.—Wilkins, Concill. iv. 625.]

holy fathers of the church frequently admonish us to forbear such inquiries, in that memorable saying of theirs, Τὸ πῶς φεῦγε ζητεῖν, 'search not into the manner' how such things can be, but shun such inquiries. For the manner of the Son's generation, and the Holy Ghost's procession, can be comprehended by none but themselves.

But such things being let alone as out of our reach, let it be your business to establish the people in this great truth, that Jesus Christ is really "the eternal Son of God, begotten of him before all worlds:" by representing this to them as the great support of their souls, which may safely rely upon one so mighty to save. For he who is persuaded that our Saviour is "perfect God as well as perfect man," can no more doubt of his power to communicate all divine grace to us, than he can doubt of the virtue of his sacrifice to make satisfaction for our sins, and work our reconciliation with God; whereby whatsoever might hinder his divine communications to us is taken out of the way. We are sure, if this be true, that he is an everlasting spring of divine grace to the whole world, would they but believe on him; whereas it is inconceivable how any mere creature should be so highly exalted as to be possessed of omnipotence and omniscience; that is, to be able to know all our needs, as well as to supply them. Which it is easy for our blessed Saviour to do, if he be the eternal Son of God, who hath taken our nature into a personal union with himself.

4. Which great truth being firmly established in their belief, endeavour, I beseech you, to improve it all you are able to the amendment of their lives. Such an amazing love of God ought to have a mighty effect upon us all, and will make a great change in us, if it be heartily believed, and pressed home by serious consideration. Let that therefore be the great business of your preaching, to reduce this and all other Christian truths to Christian practice. Make them sensible what manner of persons they ought to be *in all holy conversation and godliness*, (as St. Peter speaks,) being so nearly related to the Son of God. Whatsoever sin you know them to be addicted unto, lay the heinousness of it before them; especially after God hath loved us so much as to give his only begotten Son *to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify* us *to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*. Whatsoever duty you know

them to neglect, or to be remiss in the performance of it, represent to them how dangerous it is to disobey our blessed Saviour, who hath made this the test of our love to him, that we keep his commandments. Remember them frequently of what he said to his disciples, in his last discourse he had with them, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*[z].

5. Endeavour to convince their judgment about these things by clear reasons; and then to awaken their affections by your zeal and fervour. And that will be excited in you by an inward sense and feeling in your own hearts of that which you deliver to your people. It is an admirable observation of Erasmus (in his book *De Ratione Concionandi*[a]) upon those words of our Saviour concerning John the Baptist, *He was a burning and a shining light*[b]; *Ardere prius est, lucere posterius*; 'To burn (with zeal, that is, for God, and fervent affection to the people) is the first thing, and then we shall shine by Christian instructions.' Which will be faint and feeble, if they do not proceed from an ardent spirit.

6. And there is very much in another thing of which the same great man put me in mind in another part of his works, *lib. v. epist.* 27[c], where he tells Jodocus Jonas, *Non parum ponderis addet orationi tuæ, si quæ doces potissimum ex arcanis voluminibus haurias, si vita doctrinæ responderit, si docendi officium nulla gloriæ, nulla quæstus suspicione vitietur*; 'It will add no small weight to thy sermons, if thou draw those things that thou teachest chiefly out of the holy Scriptures; if thy life be correspondent to thy doctrine, and the office of instructing be tainted with no suspicion of vainglory or worldly advantage.' The proof of what you say out of the holy Scriptures, rightly expounded and fitly applied, will certainly make it very powerful. For what is there that hath so much force in it as the authority of God? All believers have a great reverence to his word, which the ancient Christians thought the highest learning. Insomuch that the Abyssines (who retain much of the ancient simplicity) are never so pleased as to hear the word of God alleged; and the more Scripture any man hath in his sermons, the more learned they

[z] John xv. 14.
[a] [Lib. i. tom. v. col. 790 A.]
[b] John v. 35.
[c] [Al. Epist. ccccxxxi. Opp. tom. iii. col. 448 D.]

esteem him. So Ludolphus informs us in his late *Historia Æthiopica, lib. iii. cap. v. n. 16.*

7. And there is nothing in the holy Scripture that you ought to explain with greater care, or inculcate more frequently, than the covenant of grace which God hath made with us in Christ. The terms and conditions of which you should endeavour to make your people thoroughly to understand, both on God's part and on their own; together with the Mediator of this covenant, and the means whereby he purchased such gracious conditions of salvation for us.

But above all things we must take the greatest care that our life do not contradict our doctrine; for it is not sufficient that our conversation in this world be innocent and unblamable, but we must endeavour to make it exemplary and useful. It must be so ordered as to convince the people that we firmly believe the excellence of those virtues which we commend to them; and that our chief aim and design is to save their souls. This will procure us love and esteem, and make the people look upon us with reverence as men of God. Our office, which is indeed very honourable, is not sufficient to secure us from contempt, if we act not according to it. Nay, men are prone to pry into our lives, to see if they can find a justification of their own evil practices by ours. Which is the argument that Isidorus Pelusiota uses to a bishop, to be very cautious (*lib. iv. epist.* 219[d],) ὅτι ἀπὸ μυρίων ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ γλωττῶν ἐκείνου βασανίζεται βίος, 'because his life is scanned and strictly examined by a thousand eyes and tongues.'

I shall say nothing particularly of our care to avoid any tang of vainglory, and desire of applause in our preaching, but conclude this matter with this plain admonition; that in an age so degenerate as that we now live in, we ought to give all diligence *to shine as lights in the world*, as well as to be *harmless and blameless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the word of life*[e]; by our exemplary conversation, that is, as well as by preaching. This St. Paul there makes the duty of all Christians; but above all it concerns the ministers of Christ, whom he himself calls in a peculiar manner *the salt of the earth, and the light of the world*[f]. And there never was

[d] [Col. 543.] [e] Phil. ii. 15, 16. [f] Matt. v. 13, 14.

greater need than now, that we should study to season men, not only with wholesome doctrine, but a holy example, that we may preserve them from the *corruption which is in the world through lust.* There is a most dangerous putrefaction of manners (as I may call it), which hath so universally spread among us, that I look upon the nation as lost, if we should lose our savour[e]. Nothing can then preserve it from utter ruin and destruction. And therefore let us distinguish ourselves from others, by our diligence in our calling, by our exemplary piety and holiness; that if it be possible we may save our nation from perishing.

VI. The next office wherein you are concerned is the ministration of baptism of infants. Concerning which I shall only briefly admonish you of these things following:

1. First, that it is your duty to instruct your people frequently in the nature of this sacrament; that they may not imagine it an indifferent thing whether their children be baptized or no, nor bring them carelessly to the font, as an old ceremony that hath been long used in the church: but they may look upon it as indeed it is, a solemn dedication of their children to Christ, and their entrance into the covenant of grace, which they stand bound sacredly to keep. And consequently call upon them often to consider their children after this as Christ's children, by whom they are regenerate and born again; and therefore ought to be carefully *brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*[f].

2. More particularly put them in mind that in baptism a solemn profession is made of belief in the blessed Trinity; that is, of God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: unto whose service we are there devoted. For it is no frivolous observation of Theophylact[g] upon those words of our Saviour: *Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* that οὐκ εἶπε εἰς τὰ ὀνόματα, ἀλλ' εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, 'he does not say, Baptize them into the names, but into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' For though they be three, yet their name, viz. ἡ θεότης, 'their Godhead,' is but one, as he there explains it. One God in three persons, of whose love and favour we are

[e] [Misprinted 'Saviour' in the original edition.]
[f] Ephes. vi. 4. [g] [Tom. i. p. 167 C.] [h] Matt. xxviii. 19.

assured in baptism; and should value it above all the riches in the world.

3. And therefore admonish them what care they ought to take to give up their children, as soon as they can, to this blessed Trinity: that they may be under their care, and partake of *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and of *the love of God, and the communion*, or communication, *of the Holy Ghost*, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And the first rubric before the office for private baptism directs them to admonish the people often, that they defer not the baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth, or other holiday falling between; unless upon a great and reasonable cause to be approved by you.

4. Next of all you are bound by the following rubric to warn them, that without great cause and necessity they procure not their children to be baptized at home in their houses. The reason of which is given in the first rubric before the office of public baptism, which sets forth the convenience of administering baptism only upon Sundays or other holidays, when the most number of people come together: first, for that the congregation there present may testify the receiving of such as be newly baptized into the number of Christ's church; and secondly, that every man present may be put in remembrance of his own profession made to God in his baptism. Which are such wise and holy reasons, that every man of conscience who is considerate will yield unto them.

5. Advise parents also about the choice of godfathers and godmothers, and of the usefulness of them. First, about their choice, that they be such persons as have a sense of religion, and understand it; and will take some care, it may be hoped, of their children, if they themselves should die before they be grown up. It is supposed that as long as parents live, they will put their children in mind of their vow in baptism: which is the reason that no new obligation, besides that they have already, is laid upon them by making them sureties for their children. But without this solemn undertaking for them, other men would not be so ready to assist them, and look after their education, as it is to be hoped this will make them. Which shows the other thing, the usefulness of this institution: which in the beginning of our religion was in a manner absolutely

necessary. For when parents were sometimes snatched on a sudden from their children by bloody persecutors, they might have been brought up in paganism, if these spiritual parents had not been engaged to look after them, and instil Christian principles into them.

6. You give a charge after baptism to the godfathers and godmothers, that they take care the child be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him so soon as he is fit for it: and therefore you would do well to remember them, as you have opportunity, of this part of their duty; and in order to it to see they be instructed in the church catechism set forth for that purpose.

VII. Which is the next part of your care, "diligently upon Sundays and holidays to instruct and examine openly in the church so many of the children of your parish sent unto you as you shall think convenient, in some part of the Catechism." They are the very words of the first rubric, in the end of that office, where, in the next rubric, "fathers, mothers, masters, and dames, are ordered to cause their children, servants, and apprentices, (which have not learnt their catechism,) to come to the church, at the time appointed, and obediently to hear and to be ordered by you, till they have learned all that is appointed in the Catechism for them to learn." It is to be hoped they will do this, if you call upon them and beseech them to take care of it: letting them know that you are ready and desirous to perform your duty, if they will do theirs.

And mark, I beseech you, what is required of you; not only to examine the children in the Catechism, (that is, to ask them the questions, and receive their answers,) but to "instruct them therein;" that is, teach them the meaning, and make them understand the weight of every word. If you would spend a quarter of an hour in this exercise all the summer long, when the days are long, at evening prayer, after the second lesson, (as the rubric appoints,) it would be of wonderful use both to yourselves and to your people. I say to yourselves as well as the parish, because it would put you upon considering, collecting, and digesting such proper places of Scripture as relate to every article of the Creed, and to the Commandments, and to all other parts of the Catechism; and upon studying also and framing the plainest and clearest explications, and illus-

trations of every point, couched in so few words that they might easily be carried away and remembered. Which being once well done, it would serve you all your life: the same thing being to be repeated over and over again every year. For I suppose you may be able once a year to go through the whole Catechism: which would certainly edify your people very much, and make them more capable to understand your sermons, by having a clear notion of many terms which you have constant occasion to use in them. It would bring people also to church in the afternoon; for they would soon perceive this short instruction to be as useful as any sermon. And consequently they would observe the Lord's day better: for I cannot but think that many would by this means have your explication of the Catechism by heart, and be able to instruct their children again at home.

I shall quicken you to this by what I find was done about it in the reign of king James I, who sent strict orders to the archbishop of Canterbury both respecting preaching and catechising; especially the latter: which he would have by all means "continued in the afternoon, according to the former custom in England," (so his words are[1],) which, it seems, then began to be disused. And of this the lord keeper Williams saith the king was so desirous, that he declared, "if his bishops would not take care that it should be done, he would recommend it to the care of the civil magistrate." And in a letter to the bishop of London he tells him the reason of all this: "He saw many going away to popery, or anabaptism, or other points of separation: and considering with much admiration what should be the cause of it, (especially since he opposed both so much himself,) he could think of none in greater probability than the lightness, affectedness, and unprofitableness of that kind of preaching which had of late years been much taken up in court, university, and country. The usual scope of very many preachers being noted to be soaring up in points of divinity too deep for the capacity of the people; or the mustering up a great deal of reading; or the displaying of their own wit; or an ignorant meddling with civil matters; or the venting their own distastes, &c. So the people being bred up with this kind of teaching, and never instructed in the catechetical and funda-

[1] [Archbishop Abbot's letter to the bishops, Aug. 15, 1622, in the Cabala, p. 104.]

mental points of religion, were easily led aside from their religion, either by papists, or anabaptists, or other sectaries." This I find in the Cabala of Letters, p. 112 j, which is necessary to be considered now, because since that time the explication of the Catechism in the afternoons hath been much neglected, unto which we have reason to impute the instability of many souls in their religion.

VIII. When the children of your parish are thoroughly instructed in the Church Catechism, and are come to a competent age, (as the words of the third rubric are in the end of that office,) you are to take care that they be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him.

Now such little children as are commonly presented to the bishop cannot be thought to be of a competent age; which is explained both in the title of the Order of Confirmation, and the preface to it, to signify such as are come to years of discretion. That is, to understand what they do, and consent to renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in their name at their baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in their own persons, and acknowledging themselves bound to believe and do what their godfathers and godmothers undertook for them.

As you are bound therefore (by the last rubric at the end of the Catechism), when the bishop gives notice of his intention to confirm, either to bring or send in writing, with your hands subscribed thereunto, the names of all such persons within your parish as you shall think fit to be presented to him to be confirmed: so I beseech you take care you set down the names of none but such as have a sense that they take upon themselves an obligation to keep their vow in baptism, and are resolved to do their duty towards God and towards their neighbour, as they have been taught in their Catechism.

In short, I think none ripe to be confirmed but such as are fit and disposed immediately after it to receive the holy communion of Christ's body and blood. Our church seems to signify so much, when in the end of this office it ordains that "none be admitted to the holy communion until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." One of

j [A letter from John Williams, bishop of Lincoln, lord keeper, to George Mountain, bishop of London, Sept. 3, 1622. Cabala, p. 106. ed. 3. fol. Lond. 1691.]

these is plainly here made a preparation for the other; and as none should be admitted to the communion till they be confirmed, so being confirmed, (or ready for it and desirous of it,) I take it none are to be refused the communion.

It is of the greatest concernment therefore that young people be discreet and serious before they be brought to be confirmed. Of the necessity of which king James, before mentioned, was as sensible as he was of the necessity of catechetical instruction. For his son (who was afterwards king Charles the martyr) was not confirmed till the thirteenth year of his age. Then he was confirmed on Easter Monday, 1613, in Whitehall chapel, after a long and strict examination by the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of Bath and Wells, as Dr. George Hackwell, who was an ear-witness of the satisfaction he gave, tells us in a little tractate he wrote upon that occasion concerning confirmation.

I conclude this section with these remarkable words of a famous divine of our church, Dr. Jackson, in his tenth book upon the Creed, chap. 50, (which I have mentioned, with a great deal more upon this subject, in a little book about Baptism, near forty years ago [k],) "Whether the solemn baptizing of all infants, which are the children of presumed Christian parents, throughout this kingdom, without solemn astipulation that they shall, at years of discretion, personally ratify their vow in baptism in public in such manner as the church requires, be not rather more lawful or tolerable than expedient, I leave with all submission to the consideration of higher powers." In like manner may I be bold to put this question, Whether it be to any purpose to admit those to this solemn act of ratifying and confirming their vow in baptism who are not arrived at such years of discretion as understandingly to consent thereunto, and to remember it all the days of their life. For I fear many have been confirmed who have no more memory of what they then did than they have of what was done to them in baptism.

IX. The next office wherein you are concerned is the solemnization of matrimony; which though it be not a sacrament, yet is such a holy state, that as there is the greatest reason it should be solemnized with public rites and forms by the ministers of Christ, so they ought to take care to perform it in a very solemn manner.

[k] [Vol. i. p. 49.]

It may be demonstrated that no marriage anciently was ever made among Christians which the church did not allow, and the benediction of marriage by the priest was a sign of that allowance. Nay, among the Jews it is manifest from the story of Boaz and Ruth, that marriage was celebrated before the elders[i]. And Epiphanius was of opinion that our Lord was invited to the marriage of Cana in Galilee, that as a prophet he might bless the marriage[j].

And therefore it ought to be celebrated in the church in as public a manner as may be, and with such gravity and seriousness as becomes the place, and the priestly function, and the state itself, which is holy and honourable. In order to this, the people are to be instructed often, with what advice, deliberation and reverence, such a weighty matter is to be undertaken. Of which they are excellently admonished in our Liturgy at the time of marriage; and should be admonished beforehand, that they "may not lightly or wantonly enterprise it, but discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God."

For the better security of this, keep strictly to canon LXII, which requires you to marry none except the banns of matrimony have been first published in time of divine service, three several Sundays or holy days; or a license have been obtained to do it without, according to canons C, CI, CII, CIII. Which most reasonably constitute, that none be married, either with license or after banns published, under the age of one and twenty years complete, without the consent of their parents, or of their guardians and governors, if their parents be deceased.

Remember also that marriage is to be celebrated publicly in the parish church or chapel where one of the parties dwelleth, and in no other place, and that between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon. For which reason care is taken by the second rubric in the office of matrimony, that if the persons that are to be married dwell in divers parishes, the banns must be asked in both parishes; and the curate of the one parish shall not solemnize matrimony betwixt them without a certificate of the banns being thrice asked from the curate of the other parish.

These laws are the more sacredly to be observed, because they are for the preservation of human society. Which made

[i] Ruth iv. 11.

[j] [Hæres. li. § 30. tom. i. p. 452.]

Plato say in the beginning of his book *de Legibus*[k], that the γαμικοὶ νόμοι, 'the laws for the regulating marriage,' should be the very first which a lawgiver should establish; because the propagation of mankind is the support of cities and kingdoms, of which if due care be not taken, all other laws are in vain.

This very consideration, that marriage is *seminarium generis humani*, (as Tertullian calls it, *lib.* 1. *ad Uxorem, cap.* 2[l],) was sufficient to make our church so very cautious in its constitutions about this important affair, that those many mischiefs might be prevented which have ensued from the neglect of them in many places. Which have been no less than incestuous mixtures, together with the ruin of several families, great grief of parents, by the disobedience of their children; which hath quite alienated their affections one from another, not to mention the contempt and reproach it hath brought upon those of the clergy or others that have had a hand in these irregular actions.

I question not but all imaginable care will be taken in my diocese that no license be granted but according to the canon: and none of my clergy, I persuade myself, can be so mean as to let a little money prevail with them to dishonour their holy calling, by violating those wise and pious constitutions of our church, which they have sworn, as I take it, to observe in their oath of canonical obedience.

X. The next office which follows in our Liturgy is that of Visitation of the Sick; which ought to be attended very seriously, as much, if not more than any else. For men are never so sensible of the everlasting concerns of their souls, as they are when they lie on a sick bed. If they had no thought of God before, no reflections on their ways, they can scarce avoid them in that condition. Pliny tells us he learnt this by the sickness of a friend of his, *Optimos nos esse dum infirmi sumus*, 'that we are then the best men when we are sick.' Read a most pithy epistle of his, which is wholly upon this subject, *lib.* vii. *epist.* xxvi: where among other things he tells Maximus, (to whom it is directed,) "then a man remembers that there are gods, (that you know is the pagan language,) and that he himself is but a man. Then he envies no man, admires no man, despises no man; riches signify nothing to him, nor honours; lust is extinguished, &c.: all that he

[k] [Lib. i. p. 631 D.] [l] [P. 162 A.]

desires is, that he may recover his health, purposing then to lead an innocent and happy life. So that whatsoever philosophers endeavour to teach in many words and many volumes, that I may teach thee and myself in this short precept: *Ut tales esse sani perseveremur, quales nos futuros profitemur infirmi,* 'that we continue such when we are well as we promise to be when we are sick.'" So he concludes that epistle.

By which you cannot but see what an opportunity the sickness of any of your parishioners affords you to help forward the salvation of their souls by your prayers, instructions, and exhortations, when they are most disposed to receive them, and to be tenderly affected with them. Do not stay therefore till notice be sent you by those about them of any one's sickness, (for they are too apt to defer it till there be no hope of life left,) but when you hear of it, repair to such persons, and apply yourselves to them in such discourses as are proper to their condition.

Examine them, as the office directs, about their belief in God, and in Jesus Christ, and all the rest of the articles of the Christian faith. If they have led a bad life, contrary to their belief, represent to them how highly it concerns them to repent, and resolve to become new men. Bid them consider how much they have neglected God, and his divine service, (which is a common sin,) and also what wrong they have done to any of their neighbours, that they may make them what satisfaction they are able. If they have lived in most things regularly, but been negligent in some duties, comfort and support them with this persuasion, that God hath sent this sickness to perfect what was wanting in them. As for such as have led truly pious lives, void of offence towards God and towards man, they are to be strengthened with all the consolations that are in Christ, and raised in their hope of remission of sin and eternal life, which will banish all fear of death. By this means not only the sick person may receive great benefit, but all the by-standers also who hear your discourse; which may raise such a sense of things in you as will much improve yourselves.

And here I shall admonish you only of one thing more, leaving you to the directions in the office for the rest: that absolution of penitents is a thing of great moment; which may alone be sufficient to convince you both of the dignity and the

difficulty of your holy function. For what a high honour is it to be made a judge of the state of men's immortal souls, and to pronounce a sentence upon them according as you find them upon examination! But how industriously then ought you to labour to understand the gospel of Christ, whereby you are to judge, that you may not pass a wrong sentence through ignorance of the conditions of salvation by Christ! Whose promises are made plainly to an holy life, which if it hath not been minded till a man come to die, let him not despair of God's mercy, but take heed how you absolve him in his name. For we can make no certain judgment of men by what they resolve in their sickness, when they have no temptation to run on in their former wicked course of life; but must stay to see how they will keep their resolutions, which they too often break when they are well. If they do not live to give a proof of their sincerity, God notwithstanding, who knows the secrets of all hearts, if he see them to be sincere, and that they would be steadfast, should they have recovered their health, will undoubtedly absolve them, though they depart the world without our absolution. In short, this may well (as the Pythagoreans were wont to admonish their scholars) make you reverence yourselves, so as to live up to this dignity and high authority he hath committed to you: and this very power, if you use it well, will procure you reverence from others, who understand any thing of religion.

At the end of this office is annexed the Order of administering the Communion to the Sick: which Mr. Calvin himself thinks (though it was not the usage of Geneva) should not be denied to them if they desired it, and understood what they did, and were disposed with solemn resolutions to renew their covenant with Christ. But timely notice ought to be given of this desire, with a signification how many there are to communicate with the sick person, which must be three or two at the least; unless it be in the time of a plague, or other contagious disease, when the minister may communicate with him alone.

XI. Concerning the next thing in our Liturgy, which is, The Order for the Burial of the Dead, there needs not much to be said; but that commonly men and women are apt to be very serious when they see their friends and neighbours laid in their graves; and therefore what you are then ordered to say, either

when you meet the corpse, or in the church, or at the grave, should be pronounced with great gravity, earnestness, and affection, that the hearts of those who are present may be moved with it. If you are desired to come to the house of the deceased, and thence to accompany the corpse to the grave, you may have an opportunity to put those in mind who sit near to you of preparation for death; which should never be out of our thoughts, but then especially be sensibly reflected on when we have a spectacle of mortality before our eyes. Who was as strong and healthy perhaps as any there present, and yet on a sudden snatched away. Such things piously represented are apt (for the present at least) to touch men's hearts, and make deep impressions there.

XII. Of the Churching of Women after Childbirth I shall say only this; that the first rubric directs that the woman, at the usual time after delivery, shall come into the church decently apparelled, and "there kneel down in some convenient place, as hath been accustomed." Now the accustomed place (it appears by our old Common-Prayer Book before the restoration) was "nigh to the communion table." To put her in mind, I suppose, that she should take the next opportunity to receive the holy communion; if there be none that day when the last rubric declares it is convenient she should partake of it. Unto this therefore you are to exhort her, that she may perfect her acknowledgments of God's goodness by the highest thanksgiving the church can offer; and which is proper and peculiar to Christian people.

XIII. The last office wherein you are concerned is the reading the Commination, which is to be done but once a year, on the first day of Lent: though the prayers then appointed are to be used at other times as the Ordinary shall appoint. This, if done solemnly, though it seem a thing of no great labour, yet might have a great effect. For every one knows (or ought to know) that the Lent fast was instituted to be a time of repentance; and to bring men to it, what can be more effectual than this denunciation of God's anger and judgments against sinners, with most comfortable assurances of grace and mercy to the penitent?

I know it is hard, as the world goes, to get a congregation together upon that day, when this is required to be read in the

church. You may therefore read it on the first Sunday in Lent, and then put the sense of it into your sermon; where it may be proper to press them to weigh every part of it distinctly. And in order to it, remove that foolish objection which I have heard some have in their mouths, that they cannot endure to curse their neighbours; by showing them plainly that they are not the curses of the people, but of God himself, which he hath denounced against sinners. To which when the people are ordered to say Amen, they only consent to the truth of that which God saith. The very office teaches this, when it declares the end of reading those curses gathered out of Deuteronomy xxvii. and other places of Scripture, and the people's saying Amen to them; "that they may flee from such vices, for which they affirm with their own mouth the curse of God to be due." And represent to them also, that whether they will affirm these curses to be due or no, they will fall upon them if they be such sinners as are there named; and the sooner, because they refuse to say Amen to the words of God: that is, affirm what he affirms, who is the faithful and the true.

This cavil being taken away, it will be easy to make them sensible how useful it is for them to join with you in this commination; which may awaken drowsy souls to consider and amend their evil doings, that they may escape those judgments that are threatened to them, which are unavoidable if they go on still in their sins.

There was something like this among the ancient Jews, who at certain stated times were wont to denounce a general anathema against all the Israelites who knowingly and willingly violated such and such laws. A form of which Mr. Selden hath given us out of their ritual, called *Colbo, lib.* iv. *De Jure Nat. et Gent. cap.* 7. This it is likely the Christian church thought fit to imitate, not by denouncing a formal anathema, but only by a solemn recital of the threatenings in God's laws against impenitent sinners; and their affirming the truth and certainty of them. Which in the Romish church came at last to such an anathema as I now mentioned in the Jewish ritual, called, The greater Excommunication; which here in England was denounced by every bishop twice a year, and by every parish priest four times a year against certain persons. A form

of which great curse, the same most learned person hath given us out of the ritual, according to the use of the church of Sarum, in his first book *De Synedriis, cap.* x [k], where he observes, that in the room of this our first reformers only ordered this maledictory commination (as he well styles it) to be used once a year.

In the beginning of which Commination there is mention made of "a godly discipline in the primitive church, whereby such persons as stood convicted of notorious sins were in the beginning of Lent put to open penance." This discipline we there wish might be restored again; but seem to suppose, that for the present we can only, instead of it, denounce God's anger and judgments against sinners, and make them say Amen thereunto; whereby they may stand convicted in their own consciences that they are under the curse of God, and so be brought to repentance. Had we not need then do this very seriously, if it be all that we can do of this kind? Yet let it be considered, whether we may not be able to do something more, if we will attempt it. For may not scandalous persons be more frequently presented than they are? May not private admonitions, if not public, be more used? Let us not then think fit to do nothing, because we cannot do all that we would. The right way to enlarge our authority (of the want of which we complain) is to use that which we have uprightly and faithfully. That is, if we presented none in the ecclesiastical court till private applications had been made to them, with seriousness and earnestness, unsuccessfully; and if it were done without respect to persons, parties, or interests, we might bring our courts into that just esteem and credit which they ought to have.

And having mentioned private admonition, let me, in a few words, remember you that at your ordination you promised to "use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures, as need shall require and occasion shall be given." And perhaps more good might be done this way than any other; if it were done at fitting times, with as much secresy as may be, and with apparent affection to them. In some cases perhaps it may be done most effectually by letter; which may be sent, when you

[k] [Opp. tom. i. col. 946.]

cannot have opportunity to speak to them. And here it may be proper to admonish you that dissenters from our church are thus to be dealt withal, by some way of private conference with them, not by preaching against them, for they are not there to hear it. Our own people indeed are by public discourses, as well as otherways, to be confirmed and established in our communion; but there is no way to reduce them but by private arguing with them. Which is not to be omitted; because the present act of indulgence doth not justify them in their separation, but only suspends the punishments to which they were before liable. Still they are in a state of schism, out of which you should endeavour to recover them by kind persuasions and arguments, which may work more upon them than all the penalties formerly inflicted, which made them angry, but did not convert them.

For the conclusion of this part of my treatise, I should upon the mention of Lent have said something concerning that fast, and other days of fasting or abstinence appointed by the church, which if men could be persuaded to observe, as times of recollection and examination of themselves, and prayer, they would find great benefit thereby, to the increase of Christian piety. I wrote a little book about it in the beginning of the late reign, which had the approbation of my superiors; but I have no room to say more of it here. Nor of the festivals which are ordered to be kept in commemoration of great blessings God hath bestowed upon us. Of which you should endeavour to make your people sensible; whereby they may be induced to observe them with religious joy. Especially the three chief festivals in memory of our Saviour's nativity, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Ghost.

But it is time to proceed to the other part of this discourse, which I propounded in the beginning: and I must be the shorter in it, because I have been longer in this than I at first intended.

PART II.

Having laid before you the duties, both private and public, which belong to your holy function, I come now to treat a little of the spirit wherewith they ought to be performed.

Sect. I. And above all things you must labour to possess your hearts with a spirit of love to God, whose servants you

are, and who employs you in the most glorious work in the world. A spirit, I say, of love to God the Father, who hath sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world; and to God the Son, who loved the church, and gave himself for it; and to God the Holy Ghost, who hath, by a peculiar grace, separated you from other men to minister unto Christ in his church. Which was a witness of what was said to you at your ordination; "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God." These were not empty words, nor mere lofty expressions without any power in them; but an effectual prayer for the Holy Spirit of grace, which was then conferred upon you: and should mightily move you to serve the church of Christ, in the *love of the Spirit*[l], as St. Paul speaks: that is, in the love which the Spirit of God inspires you withal. For, as he saith before in the same Epistle, *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us*[m]; so we pray in the hymn which is recited at the ordination of priests,

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.
Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.

These are not vain words if sent up with ardent affection to God, but procure for us the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, and enliven, and warm our hearts with the knowledge and love of God our Saviour. Which love we should every day endeavour to stir up, by reflecting upon the wonderful love of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost unto us. For so St. Chrysostom notes upon those words of St. Paul, Rom. xv. 30[n]. He mentions the love of the Spirit, Καθάπερ γὰρ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησε τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὁ Πατὴρ, οὕτω καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα, 'for as Christ and the Father hath loved the world, so hath the Spirit.' Upon this love we ought to reflect every morning, and ponder it so long till we find it excite in us that heavenly fire of love to God which we prayed for at our ordination.

For if we preserve this flame in our hearts, it will make us cheerful as well as diligent, restless and unwearied in the work of the Lord. Nothing can carry us through it like this, and render it so easy and sweet to us, as to think we are serving our good God in that which he loves and delights to have done;

[l] Rom. xv. 30. [m] Rom. v. 5. [n] [Tom. ix. p. 739 C.]

and to feel that every thing we do proceeds from love to him and to his service.

Our Saviour teaches us that this is the principle by which all his ministers ought to act, in that question which he asks St. Peter, and repeats it thrice after his resurrection, *Simon Peter, lovest thou me*[o]*?* and in the command which follows upon his profession that he sincerely loved him. *Feed my lambs*, and *Feed my sheep.* Take care of the souls of young and old, that they want not their proper food. For they are so dear to him, (as Theophylact there notes[p],) that he makes our care of them to be the mark of our affection to him; Τῆς εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγάπης τοῦτο ποιεῖ τεκμήριον. For it is therefore a certain token of our love to him, because it flows from thence as from its fountain and spring. If we love him, we can never neglect them. This will make us studious and industrious to promote the salvation of those souls whom Christ so dearly loved: it being the truest expression of our love to Christ. So St. Chrysostom upon this place[q]: Christ repeated this so often, to show us ποίῳ δεῖ τρόπῳ μάλιστα αὐτὸν ἀγαπᾶν, 'after what manner we ought chiefly to love him, by taking care of his flock.' Can any man read this then and be negligent? No, not if he love the Lord Jesus in sincerity: who hath bid him demonstrate his love by feeding his lambs and his sheep. There are several other things, saith that great father of the church, which may give us some confidence towards God, nay, make us illustrious and famous: "but that which above all things wins us the favour of Heaven is ἡ περὶ τοὺς πλησίον κηδεμονία, 'our tender care of our neighbours.'" Which leads to the next thing:

II. Which is a sincere love and affection to the souls of men, which Christ hath redeemed with his precious blood. If we make an estimate of them by the price which was paid for them, we cannot set too high a value upon them: and if we look upon them as invaluable beings (purchased at so dear a rate), we shall do all we can to save them: and be exceeding fearful lest any of them should be lost through our negligence.

Preserve therefore and keep alive in your hearts a spirit of love to the souls of men, especially to your parishioners. And there is no way to do this like to the consideration what it cost to redeem them; no less than the blood of the Son of God: who demonstrated thereby how precious they are in themselves,

[o] John xxi. 15, 16, 17. [p] [Tom. i. p. 769 D.] [q] [Tom. viii. p. 526 B.]

and how dear to him. Bestow a few thoughts upon this every day, and it will beget and continue in you the greatest kindness and tenderest compassion towards them: and that will move you to lay out yourselves with the utmost diligence in all the offices belonging to your function. And this, both for his sake and for theirs, that he may *see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied*, (as the prophet speaks, Isa. liii. 11,) and that they *may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory*[r].

I shall conclude what I have said of these two things (a spirit of love to God and to the souls of men) with a notable discourse of St. Austin's; who in a letter to Longinianus, a pagan philosopher, remembers him of this saying of one of the ancients, *quibus satis persuasum esset, ut nihil mallent se esse, quam viros bonos; his reliquam facilem esse doctrinam;* 'unto those who were persuaded so far as to desire nothing but to be made good men, all the rest of the instructions that philosophers could give them would be very easy.' This, he saith, he took to be a saying of Socrates, which must be acknowledged to be excellent. But then he tells him there is a far more ancient prophetical saying, which preceded this many ages; teaching men briefly, and at once, not only to desire nothing but to be made good men, but also how they may be made truly good, viz. *Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.* To him who can be persuaded to do this, *non ei reliquam facilem, sed eam totam esse doctrinam duntaxat utilem et salubrem;* I do not say as Socrates did, 'that all the rest will be easy, but that this is the whole only profitable and wholesome doctrine; and there needs no more.'

Keep this therefore perpetually in your heart, which contains in it all things else. Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour; and you have done all you need to do: for all is included in this: you will not be wanting in your duty to either of them if you heartily love them.

III. My next advice shall be in the words of the blessed apostle St. Paul, (who hath left us a wonderful example of most tender affection to men's souls: read 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8, 11,) *Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the*

[r] 2 Tim. ii. 10.

[s] Epist. xx. [Epist. ccxxxiii. ed. Ben. tom. ii. col. 845 D.]

Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him[t]. That is, when you are going to perform any part of your office, pray him to be present with you and assist you. So St. Chrysostom[u] (and out of him Theophylact[x]) expounds these words, *in the name of Christ*, Αὐτὸν καλῶν βοηθὸν, 'calling upon him to be thy helper,' πρότερον αὐτῷ εὐχόμενος, καὶ οὕτως ἅπτου τῶν ἔργων, 'first making thy prayer to him, and so go about thy business.' When you put on your surplice, for instance, think with yourselves that you are going to offer up the prayers of the people to God in the name of Jesus Christ: and then with what solemnity, with what reverence will you perform that sacred office! Especially when you have besought him to be with you, and believe that he is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth. In like manner when you go up into the pulpit, consider with yourselves that you are going to speak in the name of Christ unto his people; beseeching him to assist you, and to carry home the truths you shall deliver to their hearts and consciences. For *dexterius loquentur cum hominibus, qui prius tota mente cum Deo fuerint collocuti*, as Erasmus excellently speaks, 'they will speak with men more dexterously, who have first of all with their whole soul spoken with God.' The like I might say of other parts of your duty, which will then be most successfully discharged, when you have engaged our Lord, by solemn prayer to him, to go along with you, and accompany you.

Theodoret[y] hath another interpretation, or rather a further improvement of the sense of these words; which is this. Adorn all your words and actions τῇ μνήμῃ τοῦ δεσποτοῦ Χριστοῦ, 'with the remembrance of the Lord Christ.' That is, having invoked his blessed presence to be with you, think what he would do, how he would behave himself, and with what spirit he would perform such things as you are going about. For example, when you are going to compose a sermon, it would be of great use and efficacy, if you would think with yourselves what Christ would say to your people if he were to speak to them, what he would require of them, with what motives he would excite them, and what compassion he would express to their souls. It would be impossible then for any man, if he had

[t] Coloss. iii. 17.
[u] [Tom. i. p. 493 D.]
[x] [Tom. xi. p. 394 B.]
[y] [Tom. iii. p. 496.]

Christ in his mind, to say any thing but what he hath well considered, and will tend to make men good. He will not preach for his own glory, but for the glory of Christ; pursuing things profitable rather than plausible; not affecting in his discourse *lenocinia*, *sed remedia*, such things as may tickle the ears of idle people, but such as will cure their diseases and distempers. They are the words of Salvian in his preface to his book *de Gubernatione Dei*. Which are agreeable to the old rule which Rittershusius there mentions, Μή μοι τὰ κομψὰ, ἀλλ' ὧν δεῖ τῇ πόλει [y], 'give me not spruce things, but such as the city needs.'

They that interpret the words to this sense, "Be so mindful of Christ, that you do nothing indecorous, nothing unbeseeming the relation you have to him, nothing that may dishonour him," differ not much from the former. And therefore I conclude this advice as the apostle doth his admonition: as we ought to begin every thing with a devout remembrance of Christ, whose blessing upon us we ought to implore, so we ought to end all *by giving thanks to God through him*. That is as acceptable to him as our prayers; nay, is a powerful prayer for more of his grace. For none are so likely to receive more, as those who thankfully acknowledge what they have received already. And therefore let all your doings be thus begun and ended in *the name of Christ*. Whereby you will be preserved in his love and favour, and partake still more of his grace.

IV. Especially if you do all this in sincerity of heart. Which is that good soil, wherein if the seed of the word be not sown and received, it brings forth no fruit to perfection; and which our Saviour more particularly required in his apostles, who were to sow that good seed in men's hearts. Such persons, it is manifest, he sought for, as were plain, simple, and honest-hearted; having no worldly end to serve, but wholly bent to know the way to eternal salvation. Andrew and Peter, who were first called to follow him, it is evident were of this spirit; for they left all they had to attend him: and next to them Philip, who finding Nathanael, and telling him they had found the *Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth*, to whom he prayed him to go along with him, as soon as our Saviour saw him he said, (to

[y] [Eurip. apud Aristot. Pol. iii. 2.]

show what kind of man he delighted in,) *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*[z], which was a surprising character of him, after Nathanael had made this objection against our Saviour, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* But, as Theophylact[a] well observes, those were not *ῥήματα ἀπιστίας*, 'words of unbelief,' but *ἀκριβείας καὶ νομομαθοῦς διανοίας γινωσκούσης*, 'of a mind that accurately weighed things, and was well studied in the law:' which taught him that Christ was to come out of Bethlehem in Judæa, not out of Nazareth in Galilee. By this our Saviour judged of his sincerity, which appeared also in that notwithstanding this seeming prejudice he went along with Philip to be better informed of our Saviour.

This is one great part of that sincerity which I am now recommending to you—to have your minds free from the power of prejudice and partial affections—being desirous only to know the truth, and understand what the will of the Lord is. So St. Chrysostom upon these words, *Ἀδέκαστος γὰρ αὐτοῦ ἡ κρίσις· οὐδὲν πρὸς χάριν, οὐδὲν πρὸς ἀπέχθειαν φθέγγεται*[b]: 'His judgment was uncorrupt and unbiassed, and pronounced nothing either out of favour and affection, or out of dislike and hatred.'

Another token of which sincerity there follows, in that after this high commendation which our Lord gave him he was not at all elated by it, nor ran away with these encomiums, (as the same father speaks,) *ἀλλ' ἐπιμένει ζητῶν, καὶ ἀκριβέστερον διερευνώμενος*, &c., 'but continues inquiring and searching more exactly,' being desirous of this alone—to be more perfectly satisfied in the truth: as he was upon his next question, and our Saviour's answer to it.

By this it appears that sincerity of heart is the best disposition to understand the mind of Christ, and to be employed by him in the ministry of the gospel, as the apostles were; who had regard to nothing in this world, but only to the glory of God, and the salvation of men; in which also they found the highest satisfaction, or rather rejoicing and glorying. For so St. Paul saith, *Our rejoicing* (or glorying, or boasting) *is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly*

[z] John i. 47. [a] [Tom. i. p. 530 A.] [b] [Tom. viii. p. 117 B.]

sincerity, &c., we have our conversation in the world[c]. He served our Lord, that is, with pure intention; designing nothing but to win souls to him, by delivering his mind sincerely to them, and seeking no greater satisfaction than to have it believed and obeyed. Οὐδὲν δολερὸν, οὐχ ὑπόκρισιν, &c., as St. Chrysostom[d] glosses on those words, "There was nothing deceitful in him; no hypocrisy, no simulation, no flattery, no craft or fraud, or any thing of that kind; but he acted with all freedom, in simplicity, in truth, in a pure, uncorrupt judgment, and clear intention; having nothing concealed and hidden underneath, nothing rotten at the bottom." Thus he explains himself in the second chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, ver. 3—6: *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.*

This admirable spirit let us imitate; endeavouring after such a degree of this virtue, as to be glad if men could look into our hearts, and see our secret intentions and designs, as we are sure God doth. Who, as *he is witness* to them, (as the apostle speaks,) so will judge us according to our uprightness and integrity in seeking to do him honour and to promote the salvation of souls.

Thus the fathers of the church, particularly Gregory Nazianzen, distinguish a political Christian from a spiritual: Πολιτικοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἔργον εἶναι, πάντα ποιεῖν καὶ λέγειν, ἐξ ὧν εὐδοκιμήσει, &c. "A political person, or a man of this world's business, is to do and to say all things whereby he may do himself credit, and be honoured by others; designing no happiness beyond this present life. But a spiritual man's business is to take care of his salvation, and highly to esteem what contributes unto that, but to look upon that which doth not as nothing worth; in short, to esteem those things above all others, ἐξ ὧν ἑαυτός τε πλείστου ἄξιος ἔσται, &c., 'by which he

[c] 2 Cor. i. 12. [d] [Tom. x. p. 442 B.]

himself may be made most worth, and he may draw others by himself to the best and most excellent things[e].'"

V. There are some other qualities that make up the character of *a good minister of Jesus Christ;* of which I have not room in this little treatise particularly to discourse. For he ought to *serve the Lord with all humility of mind*[f], with *patience*[g], and with *meekness*[h]. All which St. Paul hath commended to us, together with the foregoing qualities, in that admirable description he makes of himself, 2 Corinth. vi. 3, 4, 5, 6, &c., which was part of the Epistle, I observed, for the first Sunday in Lent. Where he first of all saith, that they took care to *give no offence in any thing, that the ministry might not be blamed.* Of which I shall briefly speak a little, when I have first laid before you what follows;—*but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.* Not merely showing themselves, (saith Œcumenius on the place[i],) but more than that, *approving* or *commending* themselves; which signifies a demonstration δι' ἔργων καὶ ἀληθείας, 'by real works and deeds,' to be truly Christ's ministers. Which demonstration, saith he, they gave first of all ἐν ὑπομονῇ, 'in patience'; nay, he adds, *much patience,* πάντα φέροντες γενναίως τὰ ῥηθησόμενα, 'generously bearing all that was said of them,' that is, men's censures, reproaches, and calumnies, yea, and all the sufferings and miseries they pleased to heap upon them; which he expresses in the next words, *in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.* Upon which I cannot enlarge, nor upon what he saith of their *pureness* and *knowledge,* (i. e. their divine wisdom, whereby they approved themselves God's ministers; not by human philosophy, as the same Œcumenius expounds it,) and all the rest; but only take notice of what he saith, *by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left*[k]. As if he had said, Would ye know how we came to perform such things? (as the same author expounds it:) give ear then to what follows: It was by being armed on both sides, on the *right* and on the *left;* which are not so contrary but the *armour of righteousness* fitted both. By the right

[e] Orat. xix. p. 300. [Orat. xviii. §. 24. ed. Ben. tom. i. p. 345 C.]
[f] Acts xx. 19.
[g] 2 Tim. ii. 24.
[h] 2 Tim. ii. 25.
[i] [P. 641 D.]
[k] 2 Cor. vi. 7.

hand, saith he, the apostle understands τὰ ἐπιδέξια, 'prosperous things,' such as honour and esteem among men; which did not make us swell, nor puff us up with vainglory, and therefore were the armour or weapons of righteousness. On the left hand were the things contrary to these, temptations, persecutions, reproaches, and injuries; by which we were not dejected nor cast down, as by the other we were not elated. As if he had said, in other words, Μήτε τοῖς καλοῖς ἐπαιρόμενοι, μήτε τοῖς κακοῖς μαλακιζόμενοι, 'neither lifted up by good things nor disheartened by evil.' A proof of which immediately follows, *by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report.* In which words, saith that author, he recounts the right hand and the left hand things. And in this spirit we ought to serve the Lord Christ; not minding the vain praise of men, nor their dispraise; but only endeavouring to approve ourselves to our blessed Lord and Master with an equal mind in all conditions.

Before I end this I cannot but a little reflect upon those words wherewith the apostle begins this discourse, *giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.* Which admonishes us cautiously to avoid every thing at which men may take just exception, for this very reason, lest the gospel of Christ should be hindered, and our fault be laid upon our religion.

There is a remarkable precept to this purpose, which the apostle gives both to Timothy and to Titus; *Let no man despise thee*[l]: which some may fancy (as Theodoret[m] observes) to be a command belonging to others rather than to us, who cannot hinder men's despisals. But that is a mistake, in the apostle's opinion; who would have Timothy to know that he who commands and teaches others may preserve himself from contempt by this means: (though he was a young man:) Ἔμψυχος νόμος γενοῦ, &c., 'Be thou a living law: show in thyself the perfect work of the law: lead such a life as will bear witness to thy words.' Which life he describes in the words immediately following, *Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.* He that thus makes himself ὥσπερ εἰκὼν ἔμψυχος, καὶ ὅρος εὐζωΐας, (as Œcumenius[n] expresses it,) 'as it were a living image

[l] 1 Tim. iv. 12; Titus ii. 15. [m] [Tom. iii. p. 661.]
[n] [Tom. ii. p. 234 A.]

and rule of a good life,' will preserve himself from contempt, and not lose, but maintain his authority.

To conclude this, there is nothing the devil more desires and endeavours than to alienate the hearts of the people from their ministers; and therefore they should take the greatest care to do nothing that may give the least occasion of it. And here I cannot forbear to mind you of one thing, which hath given no small scandal; which is, the not keeping your houses, and that part of the house of God which belongs to the care of some ministers, in good repair, and leaving them so to their successors. This argues a very careless or covetous sordid spirit, minding nothing but a man's self, and the present world, and having no consideration of the future.

I hope I need not exhort you to observe the seventy-fifth canon of our church; which requires you not to resort to any taverns or alehouses at any time, other than for your honest necessities, &c., which occasions cannot be frequent nor of any long continuance. I shall only tell you that Julian the Apostate, in his famous letter to Arsacius the high priest of the pagan religion in Galatia[o], having commended the exemplary charity of Christians to the imitation of his priests, adds, (after some other good admonitions of governing their families well,) Παραίνεσον ἱερέα μήτε θεάτρῳ παραβάλλειν μήτε ἐν καπηλείῳ πίνειν, &c. 'Exhort a priest, that he neither go into the theatre, nor drink in a tavern, nor exercise any base or ignominious art. Honour those that obey these orders, and put the disobedient out of their office.' This shows how sensible he was of the necessity of the apostolical precept, that he who ministered to God *should have a good report of them which are without*[p], i. e. are not of his religion.

To conclude, think often what an honour it is to serve the Lord Jesus, and what care he took of his flock; how invaluable the souls of men are which he purchased with his blood: what an inestimable treasure the gospel of Christ is wherewith you are intrusted: in what an high station God hath placed you: and then you will never submit to so much as any mean action, but do such things as may procure you esteem, or at least prevent contempt.

And to keep this good spirit in you which I have described,

[o] [Epist. xlix. p. 430 E.] [p] 1 Tim. iii. 7.

it would be of singular use to read every Lord's day, (at least every Ordination Sunday,) the vows and promises you made when you were admitted into holy orders: which are so solemn, that it is impossible not to be moved by them, if they be not merely read, but seriously weighed and considered.

These instructions I have written in the midst of great variety of business, and with many interruptions, which may make them defective in many particulars, and less accurate than they might otherwise have been: but what they want in that, will be made up, I hope, by the sincere desire I have to do good, and by the grace of God accompanying all honest endeavours. Unto which grace I most heartily commend you, and rest,

Your affectionate brother,

SY. ELIENS.

March 19, 1697.

THE DIGNITY

OF

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

BY SYMON, LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

DIRECTED TO HIS CLERGY AT HIS FOURTH TRIENNIAL VISITATION.

THE DIGNITY

OF THE

CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

Dear Brethren,

There is nothing, as I have often represented unto you, more effectual to excite every one of us to our duty, and to make us diligent therein, than frequent reflections upon the solemn charge given us at our ordination, and our promises which thereupon ensue. In which we are admonished unto how high a dignity and to how weighty an office God hath been pleased to call us; and thereby are awakened to consider with how great care and study we ought to apply ourselves, as well that we may show ourselves dutiful and thankful unto that Lord who hath placed us in so high a dignity, as also to beware that neither we ourselves offend, nor be occasion that others offend.

Now that we may be sensible of the excellency of our office, (upon which depends the weight and difficulty of it,) I have thought fit, instead of the usual speech at my visitation, to present you with a small treatise upon that subject. And I have chosen to ground it upon those famous words of our Lord to St. Peter, St. Matthew xvi. in the beginning of the nineteenth verse, *And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, that I may at the same time instruct you in your duty, and explain a difficult passage of the holy Scripture.

Two things must be premised, before I can give you the true sense of these words, *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, and propose the matter of which I intend to discourse.

The first is, that the power which these words import was not bestowed upon St. Peter alone, (as they of the Roman

church imagine,) but what Christ here spake to him, as the prime apostle, he intended unto all the rest.

This is manifest by comparing three places in the Gospel together, which speak of this power. For what is here said of it, by way of prediction or promise, that he would confer it, is a little after spoken of by way of description and explication of the nature of this power, and the manner of using it; as you may see in the xviiith chapter of this Gospel, from ver. 15 to the 21st, where, ver. 18, he speaks in the plural number, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose &c.*, which is the very same power and in the same words promised here to St. Peter, *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* And then, in a third place, when this power is actually conferred upon them, they are all invested with it, after our Saviour's resurrection, but before his ascension[a], where he doth not say Λάβε, *Receive thou*, as if he spake to one alone, but Λάβετε, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained:* which, it is evident, was spoken indifferently to every one of them.

Now the second thing to be premised is, that the power intended to be conferred by these words was not given only to the apostles, but to their successors also unto the end of the world; and to all those that their successors should invest with it, in their several orders and degrees.

This will be clear, by considering not only the needs of the church, which was not to continue only while the apostles lived, but while the world lasted; but also from the time when this power was bestowed upon them; which must be carefully observed. Now it was given, either on the evening after our Saviour's resurrection, or else eight days after it; for the place in that particular seems to be dubious[b]. Whichsoever it was, this time shows that this power was not bestowed upon them as apostles, or as having an extraordinary office which was to expire; but as the ordinary pastors and curates of souls. For their extraordinary mission by the gift of the Holy Ghost,

[a] John xx. 22, 23. [b] John xx. 19.

and whatsoever should qualify them for the office of apostles, (that is, to preach the gospel to all nations,) was not bestowed upon them till ten days after his ascension into heaven, when the day of Pentecost was come. For our Lord had said to them just before his ascension, *Depart not from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father.* And *ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*[c].

This is a thing to be carefully heeded, as I said; for in the following discourse I shall show there is great use of it.

And now, having premised these two things, there are two more to be explained; and then we shall be easily let into the sense of these words, and see what we are to observe from them.

First, what is meant by *the kingdom of heaven.*

Secondly, what by *the keys* of it, and the giving them to his apostles.

I. By *the kingdom of heaven* is certainly meant the church of Christ, the company of believers. Which is evidently the sense of this phrase in more places than one of this very gospel: *The kingdom of heaven is like to a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares, &c.*[d] In *the kingdom of heaven*, properly so called, there are no enemies nor any tares; therefore by *the kingdom of heaven* must be meant the church. And so it is to be understood in all the rest of the parables of that chapter; and in xi. 11, xviii. 1, 3. And thus the Pharisees are said to *shut up the kingdom of heaven against men* (which is near to the phrase of our Saviour in this place), *and would neither go in themselves, nor suffer them that were entering to go in*[e]: that is, kept men from believing in Christ, and becoming members of his church. And in the same sense, another phrase is frequently used, viz. *the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, &c.*[f], that is, they should no longer be the church of God. Which in another place is thus explained: *Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom*

[c] Acts i. 4, 8. [d] Matt. xiii. 24. [e] Matt. xxiii. 13. [f] Matt. xxi. 43.

of heaven: but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out [g], *&c.* That is, men should come from far distant countries, and believe on Christ, when the gospel was preached unto them, (as Abraham the father of the faithful obeyed God's call when he bade him leave Chaldæa,) and they who till now were the only people of God, viz. the Jews, should be no longer owned by him, but cast off for their unbelief.

II. Now what is meant by the *keys* of this church will be easily understood by observing that the church is often called *the house of God* [h]. And that every house hath a door which lets into it, and that door is made fast and opened by the lock; unto which the keys belong. The giving of which to the apostles, signifies in general Christ's giving them a power over his family, and intrusting them with the care of those that belong to his house. And in particular it signifies the power of a steward; whose office is to look after every one in the family, that they both do their duty, and want nothing that is necessary for them. This will be most manifest by consulting Isaiah xxii. 20, 21, 22, from whence this expression of our Saviour's seems to be borrowed; where God threatens to put Shebna out of his office, and to confer it upon Eliakim, who was a much better man: *I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.* What that government was which he promised to give him may be learnt from ver. 15, where Shebna is said to be *over the house.* And accordingly it follows, after the words now mentioned concerning Eliakim, ver. 22, *The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.* That is, he should have the sole power of ruling the house of the king, and administer the affairs of the whole family, so that he should admit into it and exclude out of it whom he pleased, without control.

Such a power there is over the church, which originally is in Christ himself; who is said *to have the key of David* [i], that is, of the house of David. Who was pleased to communicate this

[g] Matt. viii. 11, 12. [h] Heb. iii. 2, 3, 4. [i] Rev. iii. 7.

power unto his apostles, and by them unto their successors: who were to confer it on such persons as they judged meet for this office of stewards in the church of Christ, as Eliakim was in the court of the king of Judah.

Now these words of our blessed Saviour thus explained, sufficiently warrant us to assert, that he hath advanced his ministers unto an high dignity, and given them a very great power over his people, who are the subjects of his kingdom; that is, the members of his church. I say his ministers, because this power was not left to one, but unto them all; to be distributed among them according to their several shares in this office, wherein they are placed in divers orders and degrees of power: for it being the power of stewards over a large family, it is absolutely necessary that the chief steward in it have several others under him to take part of the care upon them.

Now if we inquire into this power of a steward, it is already apparent that it consists of three parts:

First, of admitting persons into the family.

Secondly, of feeding and providing for them, when they are admitted: and,

Thirdly, of governing and keeping them in order; and, if need be, turning those out of doors who are disorderly.

They have power to open the door, to keep and maintain in the house, and to shut out of it. Such is the power of the ministers of our Lord. By them persons enter into his church, and are there instructed; and also ruled and governed. For they are not only to use the keys to open the door, and let men into the family of God, which is done by baptism; but when they are in, to keep and preserve them there, to set them about their work to provide for their welfare (as stewards feed and clothe the family): which Christ's ministers do by catechising, preaching, administering the holy communion, and other duties. And they are also to turn idle, unprofitable, and drunken servants out of the family: and upon their sincere repentance to open the door, and admit them again into it; not indeed by a new baptism, but by receiving them to the holy communion again; unto which they have a right by their baptism, upon their unfeigned repentance.

My intention is to explain to you more largely the power and duty which belongs to you, according to this little model

of it which I have now laid before you: from which will necessarily arise the duty of all Christian people, in relation to the ministers of Christ, and this power intrusted with them; which I shall represent in the conclusion.

Their office then consists in these things following:

I.

First, they are to baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; whereby, as I said, they let men into the church, and make them members of it. This is the first work in which the keys of the kingdom of heaven are employed. It is true, preaching or publishing the gospel went before this to persons of age, that they might learn into what they were baptized. But then, this work was not properly performed by them as stewards of a family, or pastors, or overseers of a flock, (for they who were heathens did not acknowledge that authority in them,) but as ministers of Christ at large: who were sent to invite all men to come to the marriage feast, (as the gospel speaks,) in the house of Christ. Unto which motion when any man consented, then he was baptized: and that was the first exercise of the power of the keys, the first act of stewards, whereby they received men into the family of our Lord Christ.

And thus it is at this day. They who are not as yet members of the church do not own them as stewards and overseers, nor are under their care as part of the family. And therefore the act of teaching such persons and instructing them in religion is performed by them as ministers of the gospel in general, not as exercising the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Baptism is the first part of that power, the first act of Christ's stewards; whereby they open the door (as I said) and let men into the church: and by this sign and token admit them into the service of Christ, and list them under his banner. See St. Cyprian in his seventy-third epistle.

If persons before they be baptized do really believe the gospel, and renouncing all other masters do in their hearts devote themselves to the service of Christ, they become secretly and invisibly members of his body. But they are not openly and professedly of his family, and so under the care and charge of his ministers, till they own Christ by being bap-

tized; till they receive his mark and cognizance, by which they are solemnly initiated into his service, and made complete Christians. And therefore they are said by the ancients then to receive their τελείωσιν, (so they called baptism,) their 'perfection;' in comparison with the weak and imperfect state wherein they were before. For now they openly contract with Christ, and take upon them his yoke; they bind themselves by solemn vows to become his servants, and to obey those whom Christ hath set in his stead, to order the affairs of his family.

And if the persons baptized be but infants, they are received thereby into the care and tuition of the church; and stand engaged to make good what is promised for them by those who brought them to be baptized. For they have upon them σφραγῖδα τοῦ Κυρίου, *the seal and badge of the Lord:* whereby they are appropriated unto him, to be peculiarly his, and to be brought up in his religion, though as yet they understand nothing of it. So great hath been the care of Christ's church to take men as early as might be into her bosom*; to gather them, as I may say, under her wings; and to commit them to the oversight and care of those who are set over the house of God, to bring them up in his knowledge and love.

II.

Secondly, when this is done, the ministers of Christ are to catechise and instruct those who are received by baptism into his family; to teach them, as soon as they are able to learn, the Christian faith, and to build them up in it: to feed them with the wholesome words of sound doctrine; to assign every one the several parts of their work, and tell them their duty in the place and station wherein God hath set them.

For this was another part of a steward's office, to take care that such as belonged to the family wanted nothing that was necessary for them. Now nothing is more necessary in the church than Christian instruction. Whence St. Paul, among many other qualifications of a bishop, which he mentions in 1 Tim. iii, saith, he must be διδακτικὸς, *apt to teach*, we translate it. Which signifies both his abilities and his propensity to this work. And in Titus i. 9, he saith, he must *hold fast the faithful word that he hath been taught, that he may be able*

by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Whereby it appears there are many parts of this duty upon which I cannot particularly insist. They are, first, to instruct in the principles of Christian religion: and secondly, to exhort and persuade men to the practice of it, both by their doctrines and examples: and thirdly, to reprove those who walk disorderly, and not according to the rules of the gospel: fourthly, to convince such as gainsay any of the truths of the gospel: and fifthly, to call men off from vain questions and unprofitable inquiries, that they may attend their necessary and unquestionable duty[k]. And the truth is, this was the ancient manner of preaching, to excite men to some virtue, or reprehend some vice; as any one may see in St. Chrysostom's sermons especially: who, after he hath expounded some portion of Scripture, according to the plain and literal meaning, doth not raise such observations as we now take the liberty to do, according to every man's judgment; but presently falls into an exhortation to the exercise of temperance or humility or charity, according as the portion of Scripture and the needs of his auditors required. And their other sermons upon festival days were only to clear the mystery of our Saviour's incarnation, death, or resurrection, &c., and to recommend, as an example, the actions and sufferings of such persons as had been esteemed saints in the church. Which tended much to the keeping unnecessary disputes out of the church, and making men more humble and less contentious. But this by the way.

Let it here be observed, that both these powers of baptizing and teaching were given to them before the power of being apostles, viz. immediately before our Saviour's ascension to heaven (read Matt. xxviii. 19, 20); and therefore these are powers still inherent in some persons, who were to succeed the apostles, not in their extraordinary, but in their ordinary office. Which observation confutes those who take upon them to preach and instruct others without authority from the bishops of the church; restraining this passage, which gave such a power unto their persons as apostles. Who they imagine could assign none to this office, nor commit this power unto others which was given them; that so they may the better assert that there are no persons now in the world to ap-

[k] Titus iii. 8. 9.

point others unto this employment, and to deliver to them those keys which Christ gave them when he spoke those words, because there are now no apostles among us. But mark what he saith in the conclusion of those words, *and, behold, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world.* Which can neither be meant of their single persons, nor of all Christians in general; but of those who should succeed them, and have this power committed by them into their hands.

III.

A third part of their office is to administer the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord unto those who are thus instructed and have learned Christ. This is another part of the food which the stewards are to prepare and give to Christ's family; and is, indeed, the noblest provision that is in the church's storehouse, the highest entertainment of the people of God. Which therefore is not presently given them at their first entrance, but reserved for them till they be confirmed in the state of Christianity; and be able to taste and relish the nature of it, to digest it, and turn it into their nourishment. And this is likewise an action whereby the several members of the family do more strongly tie themselves to Christ, and give him fresh assurances of their love; as he assures them of his.

Of this it is not proper for me now to enlarge, because my business at present is only to show that this is part of the power which Christ hath given to his ministers, and to them only; who alone can consecrate the bread and wine, and give the body and blood of Christ to the faithful. Which power was given to them before he died, just at his last supper: in the end of which he instituted the sacrament, when he said, *Do this in remembrance of me*[1].

Here it is to be diligently observed that these words, *Do this in remembrance of me*, are but twice to be found in the New Testament; though the institution of this sacrament be mentioned there four times. For the first three evangelists and St. Paul speak of its institution, but St. Luke only and St. Paul have these words; and that to different purposes, to show what every one's work and duty is. All Christians are bound to commemorate the love of their Lord and Master in this manner, and to *show forth his death till he come.* And

[1] Luke xxii. 19.

therefore in 1 Cor. xi. 24 the words run thus: *Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of me.* Where these two words, *Do this,* manifestly refer to *Take, eat,* which go before: and therefore they express the duty of Christian people. But now in the other place of the Gospel of St. Luke there is no mention of taking and eating, but the words run thus: *He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.* Where it is evident these words, *Do this,* can refer to nothing but what goes before, *He took bread, gave thanks, brake it, and gave it:* and therefore, as the former place directs what the people should do, so this directs what the pastors are to do. They are to take bread, bless it, break it, and give it: and the people are to take it, and to eat it.

And as these words are plainly spoken to them, so they are spoken before his death; and therefore before they received the power of apostleship. And consequently they belong to all his ministers unto the world's end: who alone can consecrate bread and wine to become the body and blood of Christ unto those that devoutly receive them.

All these three powers, of which I have hitherto treated, we find expressly given them in the holy Scripture: and another there is, (which I shall mention in the conclusion,) which is as expressly delivered to them as these. But there are some other intermedial powers between these and that; which though not particularly mentioned by our Saviour, yet are partly contained in those already named.

IV.

Fourthly, therefore they are to pray with and for the family, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. We have the institution of St. Paul for their praying for the family of Christ and for all men[m]. After he had bidden Timothy, in the nineteenth verse of the foregoing chapter, to war a good warfare among his flock, and to keep the faith, and a good conscience in the discharge of his ministry; as a way and means to this he thus prescribes: *I exhort therefore that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority,* &c.

[m] 2 Tim. ii. 1.

Where the word πρῶτον, *first of all*, is remarkable; denoting these to be principal parts of the priest's office. And as for blessing the people, we have the same apostle's example in the conclusion of every epistle; but especially in the last verse of the second to the Corinthians, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.*

And here two things are to be noted:

First, that though every Christian ought to pray, and that continually, both for himself and others; yet the ministers of Christ only pray as persons separate unto this office. All Christians are said to be made *priests unto God;* but not by office; not as men deputed to such a ministry of praying for others. God invites all that belong to Christ to come with boldness to the throne of grace: being admitted to a greater familiarity with him than the Jews were in former times; who prayed in the outward court only, at a distance from the sanctuary. Yet there are some persons who are more nearly related to him, being properly priests; who are set apart by him to offer up prayers, supplications, and intercessions for others. Which we cannot but think are of great efficacy, when they seriously attend unto this duty; because they are appointed by God to this office. And,

Secondly, their prayers are then of most efficacy when they celebrate the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. It being a great part of their work at that time to represent unto God the meritorious sacrifice which his blessed Son made for our sins; and by virtue of it to beg of him all spiritual blessings. For then they imitate Christ's intercession in the heavens; and do that on earth, by way of representation, which he doth by presenting himself in the presence of God for us, in the high and holy place above. Where he exhibits the sacrifice of himself before God; and so intercedes for us: which they also here upon earth commemorate; and exhibiting the same under the form of bread and wine, send up their prayers with this representation for all the blessings for which he intercedes in heaven. They show to God all that Christ hath suffered, by presenting before him his body broken and his blood shed: and by virtue of that sacrifice their prayers at that time become the more prevalent.

V.

They are also to direct, advise, and guide the people of God, by spiritual conference with them: the ministers of God being of counsel for the soul, as lawyers are for men's estates, and physicians for their bodies. So that to them men ought to resort, that they may be better acquainted with their duty, satisfied in their doubts, resolved in difficult cases, and assisted against the temptations which they find too strong for them. For though many general advices may be given from the pulpit, yet no one can meet there with every private man's malady. And therefore this office of personal instruction, as occasion requires, seems to be comprehended in the general power given God's ministers, of teaching all men, and building them up in their most holy faith.

These words of the apostle are very significant, where they are said to *watch for men's souls*[n]; that is, to be ready to embrace all opportunities they meet with of doing them good; which must be by more than public instruction. And they are also said to be ὁδηγοὶ, 'guides' to the flocks: which they cannot be, without acquaintance with them and with their state. And indeed their being made stewards, by giving them the keys of the kingdom of heaven, implies as much: that they should be acquainted, as much as is possible, with every one of the family over whom they are set.

VI.

They are also to assist the sick, by helping them to search into their consciences, and find out the diseases of their souls, and particularly what sin they may possibly labour under, for which the sickness of their body may prove a proper cure. They are to receive their confessions; to direct them unto the best remedies for removing their bad affections; to exhort, persuade and comfort them, according as their condition requires. No man that understands our religion will think it strange that I say they are to receive the sick man's confession; for St. James saith the same, *If he have committed sins*, (speaking of a sick man,) *they shall be forgiven him*[o]; ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ, 'absolution shall be given him;' and therefore confession must precede it. But to put all out of doubt, he adds in the next words, *Confess your faults one to another, and*

[n] Heb. xiii. 17. [o] James v. 14, 15, 16.

pray one for another, that ye may be healed. Two things it is evident he speaks of; the forgiving of ἁμαρτίαι, 'sins' and transgressions against God; and the forgiving of παραπτώματα, 'faults,' which are lesser crimes and trespasses against men. Now in the latter case it may be sufficient that we confess one to another; that is, to the party offended, who the apostle saith should pray to God for healing; i. e. that he would not lay his offence to his charge. But in the former case he was to confess to the elders of the church, whom he is there commanded to call for, that they may pray over him, and obtain healing and reconciliation for him.

There are other acts of their office which I shall not now mention, because I would only name the chief.

VII.

They are then to exclude men out of the Christian society, when all other means fail which Christ hath appointed to make them good Christians. When preaching, when private admonitions and reproofs, when all other good offices will not make them true to Christ, and live orderly in his house; then they who had the power of opening the door, and taking them into his family, have power to cast them out, and shut the door against them. This is called *binding* them, in the words after those I am explaining: as men are wont to do idle and false servants, who are delivered to the house of correction to be punished for their faults. This is the very last and greatest power they have for men's reformation.

And here it is to be observed, that this power, together with that which follows, was given by Christ to his ministers, as I noted in the beginning, before his ascension to heaven; and therefore doth not belong to them as apostles, which they were not made till the day of Pentecost, but as pastors of the church, stewards of Christ's household; which came down to their successors in that office.

But it is further to be noted, that the whole of this power is not in every particular minister, but only so much of it as they by whom they were ordained to their office bestowed upon them. Now if you consider the whole process against a profane person, you will easily see how much every particular minister of Christ can challenge to himself of this power. He is first to be admonished, and then to be sharply rebuked, if admoni-

tions do no good: and these duties ought to be performed by private Christians as well as by ministers. But then, thirdly, he is to be debarred of the privileges of the rest of Christian people, for some time, to see if he will repent and amend. And this is in the power of every particular minister of Christ, committed to him by the successors of the apostles at his ordination. And then follows the thrusting him out of the family, till he repent, and return to his obedience: which is such a censure as is not to be passed by any single person without the assistance of others. For it is the sentence of a judge in such a weighty concernment, that it is only in the power of a court, being an act of judgment and heavy condemnation.

VIII.

Lastly, they are to absolve the penitent: that is, such as acknowledge their sins, and reform their lives. Unto whom they are to open the door again, and let them once more into the Christian society. Not by a new baptism, but by a solemn absolution, and pronouncing them in the state wherein they were before their exclusion. And this is called *loosing*, in the words following these I am explaining; untying the former bond, and taking off the punishment inflicted. Which power is lodged in the same hands that exercised the former. They that laid on the load can only take it off.

There is indeed another sort of absolution, or acquitting; which in certain cases is in the power of every particular minister of Jesus Christ. I will mention two which our church, and the church of God every where, hath always approved.

First, in case of great dejection of spirit, which any pious soul labours under. If upon laying open the state of that soul, and a serious survey of it, and comparing it with the rule of the gospel, it be found to be faithful unto Christ; he that ministers unto it in Christ's name ought not only to apply comfort to it, but more than that, pronounce a pardon to it, and assure it of God's grace and favour. Which cannot but be of great use, and afford much satisfaction and confidence to troubled spirits: when one that can neither be suspected of ignorance nor of partiality, but is wise and holy, shall pronounce its condition to be safe, according to the word of God.

Secondly, in time of sickness and approaching death, a good

man who hath given testimony of a sincere repentance in his lifetime, and behaved himself religiously in the family of Christ, will receive no small addition of hope of future happiness from the judgment of a faithful minister of Christ: who, knowing the state of his soul and manner of life, shall absolve him from his sins in the name of Christ.

I confess they who are profane and dissolute in their health, who live without God, and without a due regard to men, following their own lusts and desires, though they show some signs of sorrow and hatred of their sins on their death bed, yet they are otherwise to be dealt withal. There is no reason they should be absolved; that is, pronounced pardoned, and in a safe condition: for as they never lived well, so nobody can tell what they will do if they should be restored to health again. It must be their punishment for beginning so late, that they go out of the world in a doubtful condition, without such a great blessing of the church as that of absolution is; which belongs to those who have overcome temptations, and conquered the devil, the world, and the flesh: which no man can do upon his death-bed, because he hath no opportunities. We cannot but conclude well of those who do well, when they had temptations to do otherwise: but as for those who only resolve to do well when they have no temptation to do evil, whatsoever hope we may have of them, we can conclude nothing certainly. They ought not to despair, but we can give them no assurance of God's mercy.

A faithful steward of the mysteries of Christ must make a difference between those that behave themselves according to the rules of the gospel, and those that live disorderly in Christ's family. He cannot honestly dispense our Saviour's blessing alike to all. They that all their life have resisted the exhortations and admonitions of the church, despised her invitations, and entreaties, and reproof, and all other remedies, must not think to be taken all on a sudden into her very bosom; but be content to depart the world in an uncertain condition: only with earnest prayers for them, and recommendations of them to the infinite mercies of God in Christ Jesus. Who knows their hearts, and whether their resolutions of amendment were well grounded, and would have held out in a time of trial: and accordingly will dispose of them.

Thus I have briefly explained to you the power Christ hath given to his ministers, by committing to them *the keys of the kingdom of heaven.* Which are words of a very lofty sound, but of no less signification: from the explication of which you cannot but learn both your dignity and your duty. You ought to think it the greatest honour in the world to serve the Lord Christ in this office. However men are pleased to esteem you, look upon yourselves as advanced to the highest and noblest preferment. With which you ought not to be puffed up, but to demean yourselves in it with the humblest reverence; because it is a very great and sacred trust. And therefore ought to fill you with solemn thoughts how to discharge it to the satisfaction of your Lord and Master: so that you may neither dishonour him nor your office by performing it negligently; but with an hearty affection and true zeal to his service. Who, as I said, hath conferred the highest honour upon you; but accompanied with a very weighty trust, which he expects you should honestly discharge. He hath honoured you with the office of stewards in his house and family, which is the kingdom of heaven: and *it is required of stewards,* (as St. Paul teacheth us, 1 Cor. iv. 2,) *that a man be found faithful.* Let none of us then, my brethren, ever prove false to our great and gracious Lord by not attending to our office; but give all diligence both to understand it, and to perform the duties belonging to it with all fidelity.

Consider what manner of persons they ought to be above all other men, *in all holy conversation and godliness;* who have a work of such importance, of such large extent, incumbent on them. How watchful, how studious, how industrious and careful they ought to be, to make use of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, wherewith they are intrusted, unto the ends and purposes for which they are committed to them. I will not enlarge this treatise by pressing upon you every particular part of your duty; but only in general beseech you to be so solicitous in the discharge of them all, that the people may be convinced of the truths I have now represented to you, and understand that you are employed in an office both of great authority and of great labour.

There are many of them who have so little knowledge of these matters, that they commonly say ministers lead a lazy

life, and have their maintenance for nothing: when the truth is, the people themselves are too willing to ease them of a great deal of their pains. They would not have them do all their work; for they will not put themselves to the trouble of going to them for any private advice, nor be at leisure to hear all their admonitions, and instructions, and reproofs. Let those therefore know, (by some means or other,) who are apt to undervalue their labours, saying, it is but stepping up into the pulpit twice a week, and making an hour's discourse, that it is their own fault if their labour be not far greater, by having daily prayers, and more frequent communions, and giving personal instructions. Pray them to give you opportunities to perform every part of your office, and they will soon see it is not an idle calling; but there is employment enough, and also care and great thoughts of heart about it, which deserve the highest encouragement. Pray them to begin to have some care of their souls, and they will find it necessary to come to you for personal direction, or to let you come to them. Desire them to be at leisure, at seasonable times, that you may take an account of their practice and of their profiting. Let them desire to be informed in what they do not understand, to use you as the physicians of their souls, as the keepers of the house of God, who are to give every one their portion in due season; and then they will discern the work is very great, and calls for skill and faithfulness, diligence and patience.

And how is it possible the people should not see, if they attend to these things, how *highly* they ought *to esteem them in love for their work's sake*, as St. Paul exhorts, 1 Thess. v. 13, and *obey those that have the rule over them and submit themselves*, as his words are Heb. xiii. 17? But if I should pursue such things as they deserve, I must make another little treatise for the people, to acquaint them with their duty, as I have made this for you that are priests. Who having the care of them, I shall leave it to you, on fitting occasions, to represent to them what regard ought to be paid to the ministers of Christ.

And omitting many other things, I shall only mention that which is most pertinent and agreeable to my present subject. Which is, that the stewards of Christ being the governors of his family, every one of that family ought to be ruled by them,

and submit to their authority in such things as they decree to be fit and expedient for the keeping the house of God in good order. For that is, without all doubt, another part of the power of those to whom Christ hath committed the care of his family in chief; to make such rules as to them shall seem most meet for the regular and seemly performance of all religious duties in his church. *Let all things* (saith St. Paul) *be done decently and in order* q. All things, he means, that I treated of before are to be so performed that they do not fall into contempt, and all confusion be avoided.

The stewards of Christ therefore are to take care that baptism, and prayers, and the holy communion, and all the rest, be administered in such a manner, that there want nothing to the due solemnity of such sacred actions. The actions and offices themselves Christ hath appointed, not they. But the manner of their performance, as to time, place, gesture, habit, and such like things, is not appointed by Christ, nor can be the same in all ages and countries, but is left to their discretion. That this then may be done with all gravity, and in the most comely and edifying manner, they are to prescribe rules and make orders: unto which every one that is under their charge ought in conscience to submit himself.

I know it is become a question with too many, whether they have such a power or no. This is a point which will not go down with those who look upon all laws as too great an abridgment of their liberty; and upon all governors as so many enemies, that would despoil them of their own will and pleasure, which is very dear to them. And so they rather choose to throw all things into confusion, though they themselves be undone thereby, than submit to be ordered by any one else, but according as they themselves judge convenient.

I will assist you therefore briefly to prove the authority of church governors, to bind the people to such rules as they think fit to make for the preserving order and decency among them.

I. And here in the first place let this be premised, which nobody can deny; that there are some things which for the time being are very decent in themselves, and others very unbecoming. And therefore, since common reason tells us that

q 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

nothing is to be managed with more solemnity and gravity than the service of Almighty God; such things are to be chosen in the performance of it as will preserve its honour and dignity, and such avoided as will expose it to contempt. Upon which account we may observe some things ordained by the law of Moses, for which no other reason can be given but only this, that there might not be any undecency in the worship of God that then was. I will give two instances, which the Jews themselves have noted. The holy things of which none but the priests might eat were appointed to be eaten in the holy place, and no where else; and likewise they were ordered to be eaten on the same day they were offered, and not kept till the morrow. For no other cause, saith R. Levi ben Gersom, but that the sacrifices might appear more glorious and magnificent: and that they might not fall into contempt by being carried into private houses, nor create any loathing in the priests by being too long reserved. Thus likewise the ephod is ordered to be bound at the top, round about the hole of it, that it might not be in danger *to be rent*[r]. The reason of which was, saith the same author, because laceration, or rending, is a very ill-favoured and unbecoming thing, though it be but in the extremity of a garment; for it signifies that thing which is torn to be tending to decay. Since things therefore were then appointed, according to the natural sense of mankind, merely for this end and no other, that what belonged to the service of God might not be despised, nor seem vile in the eyes of the people; this is not to be neglected now, but care taken of such decency as may gain a respect and reverence to what is done in the church or family of God.

II. This being premised, let it be further considered that our Lord himself hath nowhere appointed such things; and therefore he hath left them to be ordered by the wisdom of somebody else. He hath nowhere, for instance, told us in what habit the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving should be offered; nor in what manner we should eat of the holy things, that is, receive the holy communion of his body and blood: and therefore provision must be made by those who have authority from him, that these and all other services in his church be so

[r] Exod. xxviii. 32.

performed, that they be not rendered despicable and mean in the eyes of the world.

III. And this is very apparent by the holy Scriptures, that in the family of Christ all persons are not equal, but some are said to preside, to rule, to be over the rest; who are required to submit, and be subject, and obey. Which is a clear demonstration that these things are not to be put to the vote, and carried by the major part of voices in the church; but are to be appointed and determined by the leaders and governors, unto whom the rest are to yield their consent.

IV. From whence it plainly follows, that if they be to govern and the people to obey, then there must be some laws and rules made, without which there can be no government nor any obedience.

V. And again I observe in the Scripture, that the authority of these rulers was so great, that there was danger they might abuse it, by troubling the church with unnecessary observances. Else why should St. Peter caution those whom he requires to feed, and take the oversight of the flock of God, not to carry themselves *as lords over God's heritage:* that is, to use their power moderately[s]. This had been a very impertinent advice, if they had had no power at all. How was it possible for them to lord it over the flock, if they could command them nothing?

VI. And then again observe, that this admonition is not directed to the people, but to the elders themselves. He doth not call upon the flock to see that their rulers did not lord it over them, and to curb and check the power of their elders, if it grew exorbitant; but he requires the elders themselves to take care of this, that they did not domineer by commanding any thing for their mere will and pleasure, lest their power proved grievous to their people.

Upon these grounds, and twenty other things I could name, the ministers of Christ are to call upon their people to yield obedience to the appointments of the governors of his church, in matters of decency and order; which do not manifestly cross the appointments of Christ himself. They are the fittest judges of such things; and indeed there can be no other. For the

[s] 1 Peter v. 3.

people having every one peculiar fancies, will never agree about such matters; which must therefore be regulated by their guides, unto whose godly judgments they all ought to submit.

And if any one ask where Christ hath given them such authority, let them know that it is manifestly included, if the Scriptures be rightly understood, in those words of his before his ascension unto St. Peter, Ποίμαινε, *feed my sheep*[t]. For *to feed* signifies not only to instruct and teach, but also govern and make laws and orders. The words of the Psalmist concerning David are sufficient to prove this; *God took him from the sheepfold: from following the ewes great with young*, (i.e. from taking care to order them so that they did not miscarry,) *to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hand*[u]. That is, he governed them with great justice, and sincere study of their happiness; and exercised his power so as was most for their benefit.

Neither was this power given to St. Peter alone, but our Saviour tells them all they should *sit on twelve thrones*[x], that is, rule and govern his people as persons having authority over them. And that they did not exercise this power merely as apostles, or men extraordinarily called, but that it was common to all future governors of the church, appears by St. Peter's own words to the elders in the place before mentioned, *Feed the flock of God that is among you*[y], &c. That is, rule and govern them, but do it discreetly: not as absolute lords and kings in the church, (for that the word *feed* and *shepherd* anciently imported,) but as ministers, and stewards, and those that must give an account of their management.

This power hath ever been thought to be in the church since that time; and the bishop's chair hath been called by ecclesiastical writers his throne (in allusion, I suppose, to those words of our Saviour): he together with his presbyters (who are called priests ἐκ δευτέρου θρόνου, 'of a second throne, or chair') being to order all affairs in the church, with such prudence and integrity as David did the affairs of his kingdom.

[t] John xxi. 16. [u] Psalm lxxviii. 70, 71, 72. [x] Matt. xix. 28. [y] 1 Peter v. 2.

Nor can those words of our blessed Saviour be justly alleged as a bar to the exercise of such a power, where he saith, *The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister*[z], *&c.* For, first, you may be sure that our Lord could not contradict himself; who had told his apostles, in the chapter foregoing, that they should *sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And therefore, secondly, we may be sure he doth not, by this clause in their patent, divest them of all power to make rules and orders for his people: which would have been to make them like so many golden images in the church; or like a statue of a prince on a throne, that hath no life, breath, or motion. No, it is evident even by these very words that a great power is acknowledged to be committed to them: but our Saviour was afraid it might tempt them to pride and insolent behaviour; as if they were such princes as then ruled the world. And therefore his meaning is, that he would not have them look upon themselves as having only a dignity conferred on them, but a duty also incumbent upon them. He would have them remember they were not absolute lords and masters, but ministers and stewards; who were not to use their power, as the princes of this world are wont to do, merely for their own pleasure and greatness, but for the good and benefit and comfort of his church. In one word, he would have them know that they ought to exercise their authority, not to serve any private end of their own, but to promote the common good of all. So that the greater any of them was, the greater obligation lay upon him to make his greatness profitable and serviceable, not burdensome and troublesome to his people.

These things being evident and clear, if they be duly represented to your people, you may hope they are prepared to receive the exhortation of the holy apostle, *Ye youngers, submit yourselves to the elders*[a]; i. e. Ye that are learners in the school of Christ, yield unto those that teach and govern you; and do not oppose your fancies unto their judgment. *Obey those that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account,*

[z] Matt. xx. 25. [a] 1 Pet. v. 5.

that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you [b]. Where I take those words, *that they may do it with joy*, to refer unto their ruling and watchfulness: of which they must one day give an account; and then also relate how their people have behaved themselves towards them. Who ought to consider that, in the mean time, their burden is great enough in doing their duty; (if they conscientiously attend it;) and that they ought not to have this additional trouble, that their people are refractory, and will not yield to what is reasonably required of them. Study how to make your people sensible of this, that they ought to endeavour the ease and the comfort of their governors; that they may follow their employment with gladsome, and not with heavy hearts, groaning, as it were, under a load. For this, as it will be grievous to them, so it will be unprofitable to their people. It will grieve them to take a great deal of pains without any profit, or so much as thanks: and on the other side, it will provoke God's wrath against the people for their disobedience: which will be far more grievous than any of their rulers' orders. In short, whether their place and office be considered, or their solicitude and care, or the account they must give of their people's demeanour, as well as of their own, or the comfort it will be to them, or the profit it will be to the people: all these persuade them to be obedient, and submit themselves to those who *have the rule of them, and watch for their souls.*

And if any still hang back, and be unwilling to conform themselves to their orders; desire them to consider these two things with which I shall conclude this discourse:

First, the ground of their unwillingness.

Secondly, the danger and sad effects thereof.

I.

Beseech them to examine strictly, whether their unwillingness to obey in things enjoined by the authority of the church (and I may add the state too) do not arise more out of prejudice than any reason; from custom and contrary usage, rather than clear conviction of the unlawfulness of that which is enjoined. This I believe will be found to be the truth. There are no reasons weighty enough to be put into the balance

[b] Heb. xiii. 17.

against those which I have alleged. They are only light suspicions, vain surmises and fears of superstition which keep men from conforming, when it is most manifestly downright superstition to boggle at that which God hath nowhere forbidden. And it is the absurdest thing in the world to imagine, that they whom Christ hath set to rule his church, whose business it is to study to keep good order in it, should not understand what is most decent and becoming, what most edifying and profitable, what will most conduce to maintain, promote, credit and honour our religion. Which cannot stand, if a greater regard be not paid to those who are the main supporters of it.

II.

That is the other thing which ought to be represented to them, the mischievous effects of disobedience; which may incline them to use all diligence for their satisfaction. A grievous rent is hereby made in the family of Christ: his religion is disgraced, the governors of his church are disheartened and discouraged, the enemies of it are gratified, and in fine, government plainly subverted. For *where there is envying and strife*, as St. James saith, iii. 16, *there is confusion and every evil work*. These are the natural consequences of disobedience; besides the just judgments of God, who is wont to punish this sin with worse evils than thereby men seek to avoid.

When Korah, Dathan and Abiram rebelled against the government of Moses and Aaron, and refused to pay that respect which was due to those who ruled in church and state, "The sun and the moon," saith R. Eliezer in his *Pirke*, "went to God, and said that they could shine no longer if these men were suffered, as not being able to look upon such monsters." His meaning is, that heaven cannot endure disorderly persons; that the world cannot stand if they be not punished; and God, who is *not the author of confusion, but of peace*, (as St. Paul speaks,) will certainly chastise them, and sometimes destroys them. Now what judgment is there more suitable to the offence, than to deliver such unruly people into the cruel paws of enraged, embittered, and merciless governors; and suffer those to domineer over them who will not be their lords merely, but plain tyrants? Because they would not live voluntarily in

peaceable subjection, God lets them fall under such a force, that they shall enjoy no peace but such as the stones have, which are not able to knock one against another.

God of his infinite mercy prevent such a conclusion of our perverseness, which an holy, grave, learned writer of this church in the beginning of the last century left upon record as his fear and dread. For after a discourse to show that there is no better means to keep the popish yoke from us than a due esteem of our spiritual governors, and being guided by them, he adds these words, which I shall abridge: "Questionless this malapert scoffing disobedience against all ecclesiastical power, now professed by all sorts among us, is that which, to all that know God's judgments, cries louder in the ears of the Almighty (louder by much than the prayers of monks and Jesuits) for vengeance upon this land. For vengeance to be executed by no other than those our sworn enemies, to be executed by no other grievances than the doubling of the enraged Romanists' iron yoke, which is now prepared for us, ten times more heavy than that which our forefathers have borne."

Blessed be God, who hath not yet taken this vengeance on us, though this heavy iron yoke (as he justly calls it) was about to be put upon our necks, if God had not broken it in pieces by an unexpected wonderful deliverance. For which we have not been so thankful as to have a good ground of hope, that he who hath delivered will still deliver us; but quite contrary, just reason to fear the apparent danger we are now in of falling into the hands of those inveterate enemies, by the strange increase of their united power, and by our unaccountable quarrels and divisions among ourselves. For what that great man said of his days, I think is truer now, "Sure, if there be degrees of malignancy in hellish ghosts, the most potent factions of those evil spirits strive for glory by doing the greatest mischief in this land." The condition of which, if it were duly considered, common interest, it might be expected, should tie and combine those together whom love and charity cannot yet reconcile. This hath had power to bring enemies together; is it not a strange thing then, that it doth not unite neighbours and friends? We read in Numbers xxii. 7. that the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian went together unto Balaam to desire his help. These, according to

the Jewish tradition, were great enemies. How came they then now to be friends? "Hear a story," saith the Sanhedrim[a]: "Two dogs were at difference, and there came a wolf, and setting upon one of them, was like to overcome him. Then stepped in the other dog, saying to himself, I had best help my enemy, and join with him against this beast, who is a worse enemy to me than he, and will have the more courage to set upon me when he hath devoured him." You know how to apply it. When there is a common danger, whatsoever private differences we have, we should join as close as we can together; and not by holding little things very fast, let go all we have. It is an ill time to fall out with the master of a ship, when a pirate is coming to board it; and for soldiers to mutiny against their general, when the opposite army stands in battalia, and is ready to give the charge. And it is no less dangerous for people to be finding fault with the orders of their governors, when there are those at hand that are ready to destroy what we like as well as what we dislike in them.

Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things[b].

[a] [Excerpt. e Gemara Sanhedrin, cap. xi. § 56. per J. Cocceium; Opp. tom. ix. p. 258.]

[b] 2 Tim. ii. 7.

AN EXHORTATION

SENT TO

THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF ELY,

BY SYMON, LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

BEFORE HIS FIFTH TRIENNIAL VISITATION, MDCCIV.

AN EXHORTATION

TO

THE CLERGY OF ELY.

Dear Brethren,

THE late terrible storm of wind[a] hath made such a deep impression upon me, that as I cannot put it out of my mind, so it seems to call upon me to desire others to keep in mind such a dreadful instance, as I account it, of the Divine displeasure.

It was certainly the voice of God; and therefore it concerns us highly to hearken to it, and consider what it spake to us from God. For which reason I have waved such exhortations to you as I have been wont to send before my visitations; and shall in this beseech you, and desire you to beseech others, to look upon this tempest as a loud call to a speedy repentance. Which every one of us ought to practise ourselves, and preach to our people with great earnestness and pressing persuasions; lest after so much damage as we have suffered by this stormy wind, in the shattering our churches and houses, destroying our shipping, and so many seamen and others, a worse thing should come unto us.

I am the more excited to this by the remembrance of what I long ago read, when I was a member of the university, in a learned and holy divine of our church, the famous Dr. Jackson. A little volume of whose sermons, which I still have by me, I met withal, printed at Oxford in the year 1637, (entitled, "Signs of the Times, or God's Forewarnings,") preached partly before his majesty, and partly at Newcastle upon Tyne; and may now be found in the second volume of his works, p. 351[b].

In an Appendix to the last of which sermons, he having mentioned a treatise of his concerning ominous presagements, or abodings good or bad, (which was never published,) he hath these memorable words: "Among all the forewarnings given

[a] [This memorable storm, which is said to have been one of the most disastrous ever experienced in England, occurred November 26–27, 1703.]

[b] [Jackson's Works, vol. vi. p. 188.]

to this land as so many summons to repentance, none which have been given in my memory did make so durable an impression upon my heart and thoughts as that late mighty wind, which having begun his terrible visitation from the utmost point of the south west, did continue it in one night unto the north east corner of this southern province." A wind, as he describes it, much like that which lately raged, and blew from the same point of the south west, and in the same month of November, though not on the same day. For as that continued something longer, (one whole night, as I understand him,) so it fell out on the eve of the fifth of November, 1636, as ours did on the twenty-sixth, about eleven o'clock at night.

Now the very time, as he thought, of that visitation was more than a sign of the time. *Tempus ipsum admonebat.* The very time itself wherein it happened, being the vigils of that great anniversary November 5, was a sign, to his apprehension, most significant; "and did interpret (I transcribe his own words,) the meaning of this terrible messenger's inarticulate voice as well as any prophet (if there had been any then alive) could have done."

And thus much of its meaning a serious reader, he thought, might understand: "That albeit we of these kingdoms were in firm league with all the nations of the earth with whom we have any commerce, although our greatest enemies should become our greatest friends, yet it is still in the Lord Almighty's power, and we may fear in his purpose, to plague this kingdom by his own immediate hand, &c., to bury more living souls, as well of superior as of inferior rank, in the ruins of their stately houses or meaner cottages, than the powder-plotters did intend to do, or the powder plot itself, had it taken effect, could have done."

This was the admonition which he thought was given to this kingdom at that time, by that invisible, but most audible messenger (as he calls it). Which I do not find that any one hath taken notice of upon occasion of the like stormy wind in November last; though it seems to me most worthy of great consideration. For herein he was a kind of a prophet, this being written but a year before the tumults in Scotland began, which were followed by those commotions both in this kingdom and that, which shaked the very foundations of our govern-

ment, and overturned it; by dethroning and murdering our king, degrading the nobility, and enslaving the people to the will of unreasonable men; in one word, confounding all things both in church and state.

I dare not take upon me to interpret the language of the late storm so plainly as he did of that; for I am far from pretending to such a divine spirit as seems to me to have been in that holy man: but I may declare my fear that it bodes some further calamities, if we do not amend our lives, which bid an open defiance to all God's laws. And I may be allowed, nay, it is my duty, to pray as he did upon that occasion: "God grant," saith he, "every member of this church and kingdom grace to look into his own heart and purposes; and to all in authority, whether superior or inferior, from the highest to the lowest, to look not only unto their own, but unto others' ways of whom they have the care or oversight; that these may run parallel with the ways of God. Which if we shall continue to cross, or fall foul upon them, or his most sacred laws, it is not any parliamentary law, or any act of state, or decrees of courts of justice, that can break the stroke of his outstretched punishing arm and hand, and send off his dreadful judgments threatened, from falling more heavy upon us than at any time hitherto (praised be his name) they have done."

These solemn reflections of his upon the voice of that messenger of God (as he styles it) have awakened me to consider, that I having the care and oversight of you, my dear brethren, ought, upon the like occasion, to represent to you that you are highly concerned in this matter; being called by God to a weighty office and charge, that is, (as you were told at your ordination,) "to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach, and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family." And therefore, I beseech you, look to the ways of your parishioners; observe those who are negligent or deviate from the ways of God, and admonish them of their duty; exhort them to repentance, giving them both public and private monitions (as you then promised to do) with all faithful diligence.

I shall mention some few things wherein I desire your diligence. If you observe any persons to neglect the public service of God on the Lord's day, either loitering at home

carelessly, or profanely frequenting ill houses, have a great compassion upon these men, and endeavour to awaken them out of their stupidity: for if they be not atheists, they are in the direct way to that horrid impiety.

There are other solemn times also appointed by authority for humiliation, to deprecate God's displeasure, and avert his judgments, which ought to be diligently attended. And though they are not continued monthly as they have sometimes been, yet no authority (as that great man before mentioned speaks upon occasion of the storm in his days) prohibits any private man to fast upon the days appointed by the church. Whose canons enjoin, though not whole families, yet of every family some one or other to resort unto the house of God, to offer up prayers and supplications appointed by our church, upon two other special days in the week besides the Lord's day.

I know how hard it is to persuade men to come and supplicate the Divine mercy upon those we call Litany days: though it is a very easy injunction for some one out of every family to implore a blessing upon the rest. Yet try, I beseech you, what you can do to bring your people unto this, by representing to them the great benefit of it. The late dreadful tempest, which put us all into a great consternation, fell out, I observe, on a Friday night. Now I cannot but think it was a great comfort to every good man in the midst of that fright, if he reflected that he or some of his had been at church that day and commended his family to God; beseeching him, as we pray in the Litany, to deliver us "from lightning and tempest," as well as other calamities there mentioned.

And further represent to them, that they who never pray to God from one Lord's day to another, but remain the whole week without the worship of God, are in very great danger of falling into such forgetfulness of God as is a large step to atheism. Therefore exhort them to have so much care of their souls, as at least to pray to God every morning and evening in their own family, begging his blessing upon them in their several callings, and rendering their humble thanks to him for his mercies. You can easily make such a prayer for them, and beseech them to use it, which would be a good step towards the making them religious; but without this very good men have looked upon it as a sign of irreligion.

I lately met with these words of a very eminent person, which I cannot well forbear to set down here, "Constant family worship is so necessary to keep alive a constant sense of God and religion in the minds of men, that I do not see how any family that neglects it can be esteemed a family of Christians, or indeed to have any religion at all: "insomuch that another late writer quoting these words takes the confidence to say, a prayerless family is a pagan family."

But I will say no more of this, but only one word, that the late storm seems to call us to this duty; that we should not content ourselves only on Sundays to beseech God, as we do in the evening service, *to defend us from the perils and dangers of that night;* but every night before we go to rest, commend ourselves to his gracious protection; for we know not, when we lie down, whether we shall rise again; but our beds before the morning may become our graves.

It is incumbent also upon you, being the Lord's watchmen, to observe what sins are most reigning in your parish; whether drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, profaning of the Lord's day, or any other; and endeavour to convince them of these sins, and to bring them to repentance; exhorting all those who have any power in their hands to employ it with their utmost vigour for the suppressing of these vices.

But I must more particularly admonish you of one thing, which you promised at your ordination, that you would "maintain and set forward, as much as in you lieth, quietness, peace and love among all Christian people, especially among those committed to your charge." Now there was never greater need of your laborious endeavours in this business than at this time; if we may judge of all places by what we see in some, where there are such discords and divisions, such heats and animosities, such hatreds and enmities, nay, such study of revenge, as, if they be not extinguished, are sad presages of an approaching ruin. I cannot but think that the late terrible storm, which did so much mischief by land and sea, was a warning to us; calling upon us to cease the violent storms of contention that are among us, which endanger the shipwrecking of the whole kingdom.

Her most excellent majesty lately recommended this to the whole body of the nation assembled in parliament by their re-

presentatives, which she did in an extraordinary vehemence of style; telling us that she wanted words to express her earnest desire of seeing all her subjects in perfect peace and union among themselves; and therefore desires us all carefully to avoid any heats or divisions that may disappoint her of that satisfaction, and give encouragement to the common enemies of our church and state. But alas! our differences and quarrels still continue, and we are in nothing so zealous as in our fierce oppositions one to another.

It is sad to consider the lamentable effects of this, which already appears in the most unaccountable disaffection men bear to one another, in the writings and reproaches that are cast on those who have been and are the great supporters of religion among us. What a strange liberty do men tolerate in themselves, who represent these persons as the betrayers of the church, merely because they do not agree with them in some notions; that is, do not take those things to be for the service of the church which they judge very necessary! May not men differ in such things, and not fall out one with another? What reason can be given for such a license as men take to censure their superiors in this manner, who have all their lives, in all times, in all dangers, closely adhered to the interest of the church, and taken a great deal of pains in their pious labours to promote it? Might not a little modesty teach men to think, that they who are above see a little more than they who are below? If this virtue were not very scarce, men would not be so fierce and forward to censure and judge without restraint their elders, who are men of longer observation and experience than themselves.

May we not think that God sent this rough messenger (I mean the late furious tempest) to reprove the violent boisterous spirit which rages among us, and teach us more moderation, gentleness, and goodness? Which that we may learn, her majesty hath been pleased most piously once more to recommend it unto us, in the conclusion of the session of parliament yesterday; when she told us, "that though her desires which she had expressed in the beginning of it, of seeing us in perfect unity, had not met with all the success which she wished and expected; yet being fully convinced that nothing is so necessary to our common welfare, she is not discouraged from persisting in the

same earnest desires, that all will go down into their several countries so disposed to moderation and unity, as becomes those who are joined together in the same religion and interest."

By this we cannot but see, that, as she said at first, her royal heart is set on this. And let ours be so too: let nothing discourage us from the blessed work of peacemakers, remembering that whatsoever character men give us, our Lord hath pronounced such to be the *children of God.*

All these things are very plain, and have been often said, but without their desired effect; the reason of which it is worth our pains to search into. For which cause I have annexed to this short exhortation, a sermon I preached a little after the late amazing storm, in my own chapel; wherein I endeavoured to show how it comes to pass, that so many judgments as have befallen us have not amended us. There are too many, I have there observed, that mind not the hand of God in them, but impute all such things to natural causes, though they know not what.

This temper of mind renders men hopeless, unless they be awakened before they are settled in it, to have a greater regard to *the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands.* For they who are not moved by such astonishing judgments as the late storm to think of God, are more stupid and dull than the unreasonable creatures, such as the birds of the air; with which Jeremiah upbraids the Israelites, in not discerning, or not observing, those signs of the time which foreshowed God's judgments coming upon them, with the causes that provoked them: *I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord*[a].

Upon which words that great man before mentioned, Dr. Jackson, thus discourses; and it deserves our serious attention and consideration: "This stupidity or senselessness in man, whether Jew or Gentile, whether Christian or heathen, in thus

[a] Jer. viii. 6, 7.

slighting or neglecting the signs of the time, that is, such portendments or prognostics of God's judgments or calamities as the very book of nature, or of the visible creatures, affords, argues the nature, at least the disposition of men in whom this stupidity is found, to be further out of frame than the nature of the birds of the air, or beasts of the field. For they commonly foresee unseasonable weather or storm coming, and seek in time for some shelter or refuge: but so do not men for the most part return to God, who is their only refuge, under the shadow of whose wings there is only hope of safety; albeit he daily gives them more pregnant prognostics of wrath ensuing, than the disposition of the air doth unto birds or fowls."

I hope what I have said, and what follows in the ensuing discourse, may have such an effect on those that seriously consider it, as to preserve them from such a senseless temper of mind: which if it should generally prevail, I know not what will become of us; but shall be apt to say with David, *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

April 4, 1704.

Rev. xvi. 9, latter part.

And they repented not to give him glory.

WHEN we see brute creatures so sensible as to beware of those things whereby they have lately sorely suffered, it may justly raise our wonder that mankind should be so stupid, as when they have done very foolishly, and thereby ruined themselves, not to alter their course, and by repenting of their folly give glory to God and take shame to themselves.

It is something strange that any man who owns a God should adventure to affront his authority by opposing himself to his declared will; but not to repent of the fault when he hath committed it, is far more unaccountable: but it is little less than astonishing, that after men have smarted soundly for it, (which was the case of the men here spoken of,) and been severely corrected many ways, and a long time, upon that account, it should not lead them to repentance.

What! not repent after God had not only sent his Son to call them to it; and his Son had sent the Holy Ghost to give them the grace of repentance; and he had denounced terrible threatenings if they resisted this grace, which is represented in the second chapter of this book by a *sword*, nay a *two-edged sword going out of his mouth* against all contumacious sinners: but when he had began also a great while ago to take this sword into his hand, to fulfil his threatenings, and to do execution; nay, when he had made great slaughter, and his sword was become drunk with the blood of the slain! What an obstinacy was this! How hard and rough were these men's hearts! With what a mad resolution were they possessed, that nothing would satisfy them but to be utterly undone!

Was there ever any such men in the world before? or are there any now so inconsiderate, who so little understand their own interest, that they can be moved neither by words nor by blows to cease their folly, and turn to God? O that we could say there are none now who tread in the steps of these desperate sinners! that it were as certain the men in my text had no successors in their impiety, as it is certain they did but follow some ancient precedents, who had led them the way to destruction.

You may read in the fourth of Amos a most sad complaint which God made by that prophet of his people Israel, that though he had sent one judgment after another upon them, yet they returned not unto him: *I have given you want of bread in all your places: yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have withholden the rain from you: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.* And so he proceeds to mention other judgments; five times repeating this as the burden of his complaint, *Yet have ye not returned unto me.* Read at your leisure from ver. 6 to ver. 12 of that chapter.

Now the very same obstinacy which possessed those obdurate Israelites was found here again in the hearts of these apostate Christians; who, after four vials of the wrath of God had been poured out upon them, yet *repented not to give him glory:* nay, after a fifth shower of Divine vengeance was fallen upon their heads, yet it is said again, that they only *blasphemed the*

God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and *repented not of their deeds* [a].

I wish I could here make a full stop, and proceed no further in this sad history of an unrelenting spirit; that I could say, there have been none besides these so obstinately bent upon their own ruin as not to repent of their deeds, after God hath sent many terrible judgments upon them, one on the neck of another, to awaken them to it.

But hath there not been more than a spice of this disease among us in this nation; who, after twenty years of tumult and confusion, of war and bloodshed, (wherein we lost a most religious king, with our ancient government in church and state,) *did not repent to give glory unto God?* No, nor after a devouring pestilence, which soon followed the happy restoration; nor after a no less devouring fire; nor after the plague of popery, which began to break out among us, till God mercifully stopped its progress by our late wonderful deliverance? Yet we cannot say that these and other judgments (which I forbear to mention) have wrought any great alteration in us; but the same spirit still possesses us, of impiety towards God, and hatred one towards another.

It will well become every minister of the gospel to inquire and find out the cause of such impenitence: that no persuasions, no threatenings, no, nor judgments, nor the most dreadful executions (of which St. John here speaks) can move those that feel them, and groan under the burden of them, to repent of their evil deeds. And that shall be my business in the following discourse; to the end, that by finding out the causes, we may be directed how to remove the effects.

Now this stubborn impenitence may be ascribed to such causes as these:

I.

First, some sinners are apt to impute all the calamities that fall upon them and others, to bring them to repentance, unto mere chance and blind fortune. Their thoughts are so slight, that they think nothing else is concerned in them. When noisome and grievous diseases sweep multitudes away (as it was the case mentioned in the second verse of this chapter); when the fruits of the earth are blasted; when such a furious tempest

[a] Rev. xvi. 11.

rages, as lately did so much damage both at land and sea, they call it an accident, and never mind the hand of God therein.

Now how should they repent and return to him, when they do not know who it is that smites them? When *God is not in all their thoughts*, (as the psalmist speaks,) what hope is there that they should humble themselves, and submit to his corrections?

This, it is certain, was the cause of their ruin whom Amos speaks of, whose condition was parallel to theirs in my text; as may be gathered from the third chapter of his prophecy, ver. 6: *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* As much as if he had said, Do not people use to rise and run to their arms when they hear the trumpet sound? Yes, sure, though they be in their warm beds, and heavy with sleep; unless they think it a false alarm, and imagine that some idle person doth but play the wanton with them. And is there not the same reason that you should be roused by the calamities that befall you? Why should not you be stirred up thereby to look about you, and endeavour to prevent the danger which threatens you? unless you think that there is nothing in all these calamities but a concourse of accidents which fortuitously (i. e. by chance) meet together to disturb and disquiet you. But know that *there is no evil in your city but the Lord hath a hand in it.* Be not so sottish as to fancy that he doth not interest himself in all that befalls you. Look upon them as Divine admonitions, as warning pieces shot from heaven to awaken your drowsy souls to repent, and keep off further danger.

Thus the prophet Micah speaks to the people of Judah, as Amos had done unto those of Israel: *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it*[b]. It is the Lord of heaven and earth that calls aloud to you by these judgments; and if there be any man among you that hath not lost his reason and discretion, he will *see God's name*, that is, his power, justice, and truth, in these things, whereby he rebukes men for their iniquity: therefore hearken to the *voice of the rod*,

[b] Micah vi. 9.

mind and consider what it saith, and think that God himself speaks to you by its mouth.

And what doth the rod of God say, when at any time you feel its strokes? The prophet there tells us in the very next words: *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?* ver. 10. And so he goes on to relate what violence was in their hands, what fraud in their dealings; how they spake lies, and their tongues were deceitful in their mouths: that is, the rod of God accused them of those sins which then reigned most among them; and called upon them to repent of them. And as it concerned them very highly in those days, so it doth us now in such cases to show ourselves *men of wisdom*, and not to be so foolish as to impute all the evil that befalls us to mere chance; lest the Divine vengeance proceed to such an extremity as there follows, ver. 13: *Therefore will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.*

That is the usual effect of atheism and irreligion, when men will not be cured of it, that they be extirpated and rooted out of the earth, and their country be laid desolate: it not being fit that they should live who will not acknowledge the God of their life.

This is one great cause why there is no amendment, no, not by the severest judgments. Men are void of a sense of God, which is the beginning of all religion and goodness.

II.

Another cause why men do not repent when they are punished so severely for their sins as the men whom St. John here speaks of were, is this; that many who have some sense of God, have such a good opinion of themselves, that they look upon these punishments that are inflicted on a nation as the desert of other men's sins, and not of their own. There are those who acknowledge the hand of God in all common calamities, who yet imagine they see that hand stretched out against another sort of men, and not against themselves.

There is scarce any country or place but it is divided into several parties and factions: all great cities are inhabited by men of different opinions and persuasions in some thing or

other; and each think the way wherein the other is to be absurd and dangerous. Now when any mischief befalls that place, every party is wont to impute it to the other's fault, and though they all suffer in it, throw the guilt off from themselves, and lay it upon other men's backs. Every one is forward and glad to absolve himself, and transfers the deserts of his own sins to another man's crimes.

Now this humour (when it prevails, and it is commonly one of the lamentable effects of all divisions) unavoidably hinders men's return to God. For whilst all cast the blame from off themselves, they must needs continue as they were before: while every one thinks another bad, there is nobody grows better: when they expect their neighbours should amend, they do not amend themselves. It is you that have drawn this ruin upon us, says one sort of men; Nay, it is you, replies the other: and so while they toss the guilt (as I may speak) from one side to the other, it remains among them all.

If you would not have your hearts hardened in sin, every man must suspect himself, and endeavour to find out his own iniquity. He must not entertain such an opinion of his own innocence, and other men's lewdness, as to imagine the guilt is not divided between them. But, as the prophet Zachary saith, *every family* or tribe *apart* should be forced to bewail and mourn for their afflictions[c]. So truly we ought to do for our sins: every man, every family, of whatsoever persuasion they be, ought to ask themselves, What have we done? For, more or less, all have offended God.

Till there be this sobriety, this humility, this holy jealousy over ourselves, this impartiality and upright judgment, there is no hope men should be brought to repentance: but every one will rush forward in his evil courses, like the horse into the battle; fearing no danger, and seeing no fault at all that should make him distrust himself in the course wherein he is engaged.

III.

I may add unto this, as being nearly linked to it, that the hatred which men of different persuasions usually bear to each other is another cause they do not return to God; because they are vehemently bent on other designs against men. They

[c] Zech. xii. 11, &c.

are so full of thoughts how to make a strong opposition to them, that they consider nothing else, no, not the common ruin that is likely to come upon them all. Their hearts are so entirely possessed with earnest desires to supplant each other, that there is no room for other thoughts; especially when they imagine that by such contrivances they are doing God good service. This blinds their eyes, so that they can see no fault in themselves, nor no good in others: nay, this mutual hatred which they have conceived makes them ofttimes look upon the evils which befall them as coming from men, and not from God; and so they are tempted to seek rather to be revenged of them, than to be reconciled to him.

Thus it is likely it was with Samaria, against whom Amos prophesied; who worshipped God upon another mountain different from that at Jerusalem, nay, opposite unto it: and so all their care was to keep at as great a distance as they could from Judah, though they still remained at a wider distance from God. The very thing, I fear, that hath undone many in these days, who have no greater concern than to destroy those that are opposite to them. Their hearts are so fraught with a bitter zeal this way, that they have no regard to any thing else. Their sins lie quiet and safe, and are not at all opposed, while they are furiously engaged in these enmities; nay, all God's judgments, which are intended to allay these heats, serve only to inflame their spirits in these inveterate hatreds.

For they imagine, as I said, those whom they oppose to be the causes or the instruments of all those evils that befall them; and so they employ their thoughts, and their desires, and their tongues too against them, and not against the true cause of all their sins and iniquities, which escape without any censure. Their minds are quite drawn from the consideration how they provoke God, by the continual provocation they receive one from another. They cannot return to him, because they have turned all their thoughts and cares another way, from whence they will not be diverted.

So dangerous a thing it is to have our hearts fraught with hatred, as they too commonly are, when men are engaged in opposite factions: which is not only very wicked in itself, being directly contrary to the Christian spirit, the very bane of

religion, nay, and of human society; but (besides other mischievous consequences) it obstructs men's repentance, and hardens them in their sins; which are not observed or not corrected while they are violently bent to prosecute other men, whom they think more faulty than themselves.

Of this disease therefore we must seek a cure, by such serious thoughts as these: that nothing is so odious as sin and wickedness, and above all other sins, this of hatred and malignity, bitter strife and debate, especially upon the score of religion; and these or any other sins are least to be endured in ourselves, if we be guilty of them: and if we are guilty of them, but do not see them, or are not sensible of them, we are unfit judges of the faults of other men. But if men do see them, and will not in the first study to amend themselves, how can they reasonably hope that others should amend their faults? Or with what face can they accuse their neighbours, when they lie under the same guilt which they charge on them; and have not such power over others as they have over their own hearts and ways, and therefore must begin to reform at home? Which if we would do, we have this comfortable assurance from the Wise Man, that *when a man's ways please the Lord, he will make even his enemies to be at peace with him* [h].

In the verse before which words, there is this remark made by the same Wise Man, that *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* From whence I might take occasion to observe, that on the contrary, men do not depart from evil, because instead of cherishing an holy fear in their hearts, they soothe themselves up with vain hopes. This I might allege as another cause that men do not repent, even when they feel the hand of God scourging them for their sins: they flatter themselves very easily with a belief of better times, though they do not grow better themselves. When a judgment is removed, they hope the like will not return again. And the more merciful God is, in not letting it lie long, (which by the way hath been our own case,) the more confident men grow that they are out of all danger. But if I should enlarge on this, I should not leave room for that which I take to be more material.

[h] Prov. xvi. 7.

IV.

The next thing therefore to which, I think, men's impenitence may be justly ascribed is, that they are apt to think God's mind may be altered and turned towards them by some means or other, though they do not turn to him. They may appease him, they fancy, and keep off utter desolation, without a thorough reformation. Their solemn prayers, for instance, and supplications, especially if joined with fasting and sorrowful humiliation of themselves, will move him, they think, to lay aside his anger, though it be ever so great.

And indeed these are such prevalent things, that I wish men were generally more serious and frequent in the practice of them: for they suppose we are sensible of our sin and of our danger, and consequently that we are willing to do any thing to obtain a pardon for the one, and a removal of the other. They that are truly humbled are ready to submit to any terms, and consent to every thing that is proposed to them. But if we rest here, and go no further, if we have only some good desires, inclinations, and purposes, and then fall into this opinion, that God may be importuned hereby to be merciful to us, without any further care to procure his favour; this is such a conceit, that where it prevails, there is no reason to expect a change of men's life and manners.

This was it undid the Jews, and brought them to utter ruin. For when their country was already desolate, when their cities were burnt with fire, (as we read in Isaiah i. 7,) then they thought to appease the Divine Majesty with a multitude of sacrifices, with the fat of fed beasts, with their oblations and incense, their new moons and solemn assemblies: though they did not put away the evil of their doings from before his eyes, as we read there, ver. 11, 12, 13, and those that follow. Where he protests that all these things were an abomination, that he loathed and abhorred those services, though of his own institution, that he was weary to bear them; that they rather more provoked than atoned him by these means.

And therefore he threatens *to hide his eyes from them when they spread forth their hands to him; yea, when they made many prayers, he would not hear them:* the reason follows, ver. 15. *Your hands are full of blood.* They did not lift up

pure hands unto him (as the apostle exhorts), and therefore, to put them in the right way, he calls upon them, ver. 16, 17, *Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead the cause of the widow.* And then adds, *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* As much as to say, Now the business is done, now we are agreed, but not till now. This is the thing that will turn away my wrath; not prayers alone, though ever so earnest; not sacrifices, though ever so rich; not solemn days for divine service, though strictly observed; which are only the means, not the end; and therefore, we must not rest in them till they bring us to that for which they are designed, the making us truly better. Which we shall never be, till we settle this belief in our mind; that it is impossible to prevail with God to cease his anger, till we cease to do evil and learn to do well; that is, till we cease to provoke him to anger.

This is the doctrine of that prophet, and the very same the prophet Amos preached to the Israelites, which he did to the Jews, v. 21, 22, &c.: *I hate and despise your feast-days, and I will not smell* (or relish) *your holy assemblies. Though you offer me burnt-offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of thy songs,* or hymns; *for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment come down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.* Till we learn such lessons as this, and not trust merely to our prayers and solemn days, we are in a ready way to destruction: because these we would have God to accept, instead of repentance and amendment of life; when without this he declares, he is so far from accepting the other, that he will have no regard to them, nay, despises and hates them.

There is a solemn time now approaching (which we call Lent) of fasting and humiliation, in which many of us, I hope, will make a conscience of performing some of the duties belonging to it; that is, spend some time more than ordinary in prayer, in reading, in calling ourselves to an account, and

reflecting on our former life: using likewise some kind of abstinence, if not fasting, as we find it most profitable. But let us not, I beseech you, content ourselves with the bare external performance of these things; which will very much increase our guilt, if they breed in us such a mean opinion of God, that we imagine he can be pleased with these outward exercises alone, though there follow no inward change of our hearts, nor any reformation of life; which he expects should be wrought by such means, because for that end they were ordained. Fasting, for instance, is an excellent remedy for many sins; but then it must cure them, or else it is good for little.

Shall I desire you to hear part of a discourse of St. Chrysostom upon this subject, in his third sermon to the people of Antioch[a]. "He that defines fasting by mere abstinence from food, he it is that dishonours fasting. For it is not mere abstinence from food, but departing from evil. Dost thou fast? Show it by thy works. If thou askest, What works? I answer, If thou seest a poor man, relieve him; if thou meetest an enemy, be reconciled to him; if thou seest a neighbour in greater prosperity than thyself, do not envy him. Let not thy stomach only fast, but thy eyes, thy ears, thy feet, thy hands, and all the rest of the members of thy body. Let thy hands abstain from extortion, rapine, covetousness, and violence: let thy feet keep a fast, by stopping their course to unlawful spectacles. Let thy eyes abstain from wanton glances. Let thy ears keep a fast by not listening to detraction, calumnies, accusations, but turning away from those that whisper them. Let the mouth also fast from filthy communication, from reproaches, from reviling, from railing, evil speaking, lying and slandering.

"For what good doth it to abstain from eating flesh, or from fish either, if we bite and devour one another? Now he that detracts, he that backbites another, he eats his brother's flesh, he bites his neighbour. From which St. Paul terrifies us when he saith, *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*[b]. Thou hast not fastened thy teeth in a bit of flesh all this Lent, but thou hast fastened a false accusation, an evil surmise, an unjust suspicion, an ungrounded jealousy, in the soul of another; whereby thou hast wounded that soul, and those whom thou hast falsely

[a] [Tom. ii. pp. 41, 42.] [b] Galat. v. 15.

accused, and affected thyself with innumerable evils." Which he there reckons up, but I shall not mention, because it is time to tell you how he concludes in these words:

"Though we should eat ashes, such severity will do us no service, unless we abstain from detraction. For not those things that enter into the mouth defile the man, *but those things that proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,* (i. e. designs,) *murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile the man*[c]." And then he beseeches them not to think it enough that they have been serious for a few days, but to look upon themselves as bound to reform their life, if they expected to be happy. For as they who are very sick, unless they alter their way of living, will receive no benefit by the strictness of their diet for a little time: so unless sinners," saith he, "will be always sober, two or three days of fasting will do them no good."

V.

And so I proceed to the last thing I shall mention as the cause of men's not repenting; no, not though they be loudly awakened to it by terrible judgments; which is the slightness of their thoughts, the want of serious consideration, which makes God's word and all his works prove ineffectual. We can allege no other cause of what I just now said, that they make some part of their duty, and the least part, serve for the whole. Of which they could not be guilty, did they consider either the nature of God, or the nature of sin, or the nature of those duties which they are willing to perform, or indeed any thing else that belongs to religion.

I have not room to enlarge upon all these, and therefore shall particularly confine myself to that which the text principally relates unto, the Divine judgments; which ought, above all things, to awaken us to consideration; without which they leave no deep impression upon us. Of the necessity of this the Wise Man admonishes us in that grave counsel which he gives; *In the day of adversity consider*[d]. Consider what you have done; consider what God would have you to do; consider the reason why you should do it; consider your dan-

[c] Matt. xv. 18. [d] Eccles. vii. 14.

ger if you do it not; yea, consider what it is that is wont to keep you from consideration.

One thing, I am sure, is the love of the bodily life; the desire of fleshly ease and delights. These are unwilling that a man should grow serious. They are all spoiled if he become considerate. They tempt him to throw away all thoughts, that so he may enjoy himself more sweetly, and not be disturbed in his pleasures.

Let us beware therefore of these enchantments. Let us take heed we be not lulled asleep in the lap of sensual enjoyments; for fear our ruin fall upon us when we are not aware of it.

Above all, in time of great distress by any public or private calamity, we ought to shun voluptuousness, as we do shelves and quicksands; which men more especially dread in a storm. Then it is most unseasonable to make ourselves merry when we are in great danger. For that is the way to throw off all consideration; even then when to consider is most necessary, and will do us the greatest service. It is a sign men are void of all sense, and have no more fear than the brutes; which eat and drink just as they used to do, when they see one of their fellows slaughtered before their eyes. Read what the prophet Isaiah writes about this matter in chap. xxii. 12, 13, 14; *In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and mourning, to baldness, and girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die, saith the Lord God of hosts.* Purged from them! No, how was it possible, when they themselves opposed the means of their cure? God called for mourning; and they, quite contrary, betook themselves to merriment and pleasure. They were like unto some sick persons, who, at that very time when they are under the physician's hands, will not forbear their intemperance or bad diet, which was the cause of their disease. Doth any man expect his medicines will work the effect he desires, when he to whom they are administered will not refrain from full meals, or from his mushrooms and unwholesome diet? He may pray his heart out, who begs health of God while he does nothing but disorder himself, even while he is confined to his

chamber for his recovery. And just so unsuccessful will all those supplications prove which are made to God for the saving of our souls or of our country from ruin, while we continue to oppose his Divine methods from whom all salvation comes.

For it is altogether like to a man that calls for quarter, and begs mercy of his enemy that hath him in his power; though at the same time he deals his blows round about him as thick as ever, and shows no sign that he abates his hostility. Such supplications are perfectly ridiculous: they carry in themselves their own denial; they forbid that which they ask, and undermine the very foundation of the request.

If then we would not be numbered with those stubborn rebels who gave the occasion of this discourse, and after many vials of God's wrath poured on them *repented not to give him glory:* if you would not be like the old Samaritans whom Amos speaks of, nor hear those sighs so often repeated of you, as they were of them, *Yet ye returned not unto me, saith the Lord: Yet ye returned not unto me, &c.;* do not rely upon your prayers alone, or the most passionate beseechings you can use, for mercy from God; but join therewith sober and considering thoughts; especially when he calls you to them in any kind of trouble. *In the day of adversity consider.*

Consider, among other things, what I have now represented to you. Consider the causes of the hardness of men's hearts; and then, if you have any fear of the Divine Majesty and of his judgments, how can you choose but return to him?

Think that it is God who calls upon you to repent by every affliction that befalls you.

Think that he bids you search and try your own ways, and leave others to examine theirs.

Think that you are not so much concerned to persuade others to be of your mind, as to persuade yourself to be of God's.

Set yourselves against men's notorious vices more than against them.

Be not secure, nor flatter up yourselves with vain hopes.

Believe that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.

Do not imagine you should employ your time to move him; but to move yourselves to change your will.

Consider that he is always the same; and that it is we who must alter and turn, not he: that he is ever an enemy to the bad, and a friend to the good; and that nothing can alter this eternal reason and law: that we do but spend our breath in vain, if we seek to incline him unto us, without more than an inclination unto him; that is, without actual amendment of our wicked life.

In conclusion, believe that the greatest bane of all good thoughts and desires is a voluptuous life. This extinguishes all the sparks of grace that are in men's souls: it chokes and stifles all virtuous motions: and therefore let us avoid it as we would everlasting damnation.

Consider these things frequently; and consider withal how by taking this course you will glorify God: for St. John here supposes, that *to repent is to give him glory.*

APPLICATION.

Would you not, before you leave this world, do some honour unto him who brought you hither? Repent then, alter the course of your life, for that is an effectual acknowledgment of God in all the perfections belonging to his divine nature; which the Scripture means by *giving him glory.*

By this we humbly acknowledge the authority he hath over us, and confess his right to give us laws, whereby we ought to be ruled and governed.

These laws also we acknowledge to be equal, just, and good, when, forsaking all other ways, we return to their obedience.

Whereby we acknowledge also his wisdom; that we are in the wrong, and he in the right; that we have played the fool, and followed after lies, and he alone can make us wise unto salvation.

The truth also of his threatenings is acknowledged by repentance, which gives him the glory of his veracity in what he hath denounced against sinners.

And so it doth also glorify his power, which conquers souls, and subdues hearts, and turns about men's obstinate wills, and carries them captive to the obedience of faith.

For repentance is a yielding the victory to God, who hath long strove with us. It is a throwing down our arms, and

professing ourselves overcome by the force of his conviction, by the strength of his truth, by the mightiness of his love, and by the power of his holy Spirit.

What need I speak of the honour it doth to his holiness? It being an open declaration, that he cannot be in love with sin, nor by any means be reconciled to it, though his love be ever so great unto us.

His unchangeableness is likewise hereby acknowledged: that we must turn and become like unto him, but he cannot turn and become like unto us.

I omit the rest, and only put you in mind how hereby we acknowledge that he is the fountain of true bliss; that the felicity of our souls lies in his favour and love; that after we have tired ourselves with a fond long pursuit of happiness in other things, we can find no rest to our souls but in him alone, whose will is the rule of righteousness, whose nature is to be happy.

We flee therefore to him by repentance, as the only comfort of reasonable beings; as the rest and repose of human souls, as the solid and immortal joy of our minds, in conjunction with whom we cannot but be happy, and in separation from whom we must needs be inconceivably miserable.

If all these be too much to remember, keep in mind only the first and the last of them, and you will be sufficiently satisfied of the glory you give to God by repentance. For it is an acknowledgment of him to be both our sovereign Lord and our sovereign Good, our Ruler and our Rewarder, as having supreme authority and supreme felicity: or in the apostle's language, *the blessed and one Potentate, who only hath immortality.*

We disclaim hereby all other governors; and we protest we have no other good. We resign ourselves to his holy will and pleasure, and profess that our highest pleasure and contentment is in pleasing him, in loving him, and hoping he will be well pleased with us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Who hath told us, that *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.* This he repeats twice in the same place, Luke xv. 7, 10. Which cannot but suggest to our thoughts what an exceeding great joy there would be in the presence of

God if a whole nation did repent, or if the generality of men among us did grow better.

This God expects should be the fruit of his blessed Gospel, which we have long enjoyed; and the fruit of his many severe chastisements which he hath inflicted on us for our sins. Upon which if we did seriously and frequently reflect, and consider such things as I have laid before you in this discourse, instead of such complaints as Amos and St. John make, we might say with the prophet Ezekiel, xviii. 27, 28:

When the wicked turneth from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, and not die. Amen.

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